JANUARY 1995

COMPUSERVE MAGAZINE

Using Newsgroups: Internet's Message Centers—p. 23

Insurance for the Botched Job—p. 31

Guitar Strings and Threads—p. 38

TOOL ZONE

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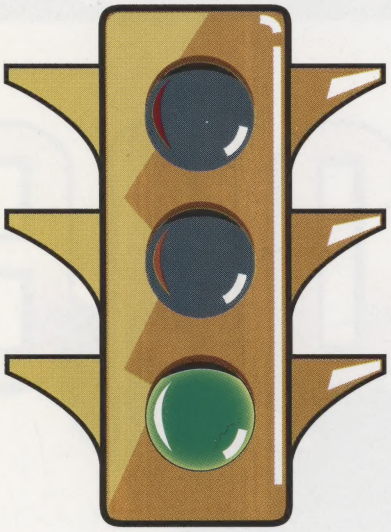

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If you've ever thought to yourself, "Why can't I do *this* in Windows?" or "There must be an easier way to open these files," you've experienced the impetus for the creation of utilities, computing's little programs that prove to be a big help in getting more out of an operating system or application. CompuServe is brimming with these wonderful tools, and our guided tour takes you past some of the more popular and, of course, useful utilities around. Plus: Instructions on using the File Finders; decompressing utility downloads and registering shareware titles; ZiffNet's exclusive utilities.

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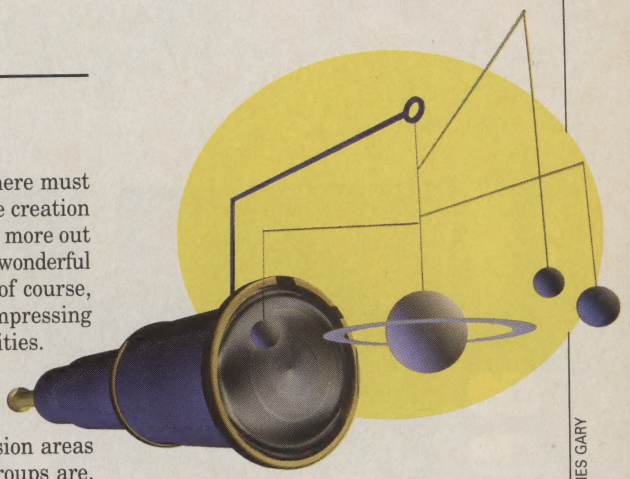

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Dear Reader

A gold mine of utilities exists on the Information Service. It's vast, deep, and can be daunting. We often get letters from readers saying they don't know how to find the utilities they need, let alone unzip or unstuff them. While many forum libraries offer instructional information on these topics, we decided to pull it all together in this month's feature, beginning on page 11.

What *are* utilities, anyway? *Que's Computer User's Dictionary* (4th Edition) says a utility program "assists you in maintaining and improving the efficiency of a computer system." That definition covers functional utilities such as 4DOS and WinMap, but what about PeeWee's Secret Word, which evokes a chorus of screams at the typing of a word, or Comment, which spits out bizarre quotations? Some utilities are just plain fun.

A characteristic defining all utilities is need—CompuServe members are driven to forum libraries to look for programs that fill the cracks in their operating systems, solve business and personal problems, or make the daily computing routine more enjoyable. Another commonality is that all are shareware or freeware, offering efficiency at minimal or no cost. Thus, it's a good idea to search for a shareware program online before heading to the local computer store.

Utilities mentioned in the feature's text are indexed in the margins. We hope you find this a handy way to identify the programs you want to download. Note: To download files from Ziff areas, you need to be a ZiffNet member, which involves a $2.95 monthly charge.

* * *

When questions arise about using the CompuServe Information Service, the most common reaction is to call Customer Service. There are many other avenues, however, to get those questions answered. One way is to leave a message in Section 16, "Ask Customer Service," of the New Member Forum (GO NEWMEMBER), where Customer Service representatives answer questions. Also, the New Member Welcome Center (GO WELCOME) provides answers in the Customer Service Help Database, including how to upload and download a file, read and search forum messages, locate ticker symbols and CUSIP numbers for financial securities, and much more.

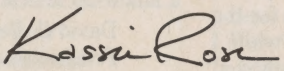
"A Concourse for Newcomers," on page 44, introduces the New Member Welcome Center and Forum. We wanted to highlight these valuable resources for *all* members.

* * *

Are you using the latest version of CompuServe Information Manager software? If not, you're missing out on user-friendly iconic menus and greater reliability. It's easy and cheap to download updated DOS, Macintosh, OS/2, and Windows versions from the GO CIMSOFT area. As time goes on, members who don't keep up with new versions won't be able to take advantage of enhanced features.

For example, CIM developers are working on hypertext links. That means CIM users will be able to navigate CompuServe by clicking on text that will take them to a related area of interest—you could be reading a What's New announcement that, when the text is clicked, displays a graphic, produces a sound byte, or pulls up an affiliated news article.

Throughout this coming year, new versions of CIM will gradually assume such "rich text" capability. Watch the daily What's New menu or check the CIM support forums for information and discussion on hypertext links as the technology becomes available.



Kassie Rose
Editor

Letters

Taking It With You

Thanks for the great article "No-Office Computing" in the October issue (p. 10). It was a very good introduction to the world of mobile computing. However, "in-office" mobile computing was not discussed. I am a chiropractic physician and currently use a Compaq Concerto '486/33-MHz pen-based computer with a 250MB hard drive. I primarily use this system in my office to record the case notes of my patients with a special artificial-intelligence-based program that converts my scribbles into dictation-quality reports. Before mobile computing, I spent half an hour to an hour each day transcribing and writing case notes in the standard demanded in the health-care profession. With mobile computing I can do this on the fly, carrying my computer with me as I see patients.

Chris G. Dalrymple, D.C.
Brenham, Texas
71173,331

"Top 10 Tips for Road Warriors" (p. 12) suggests a connectivity kit for rooms that aren't modem-friendly. As a certified telecommunications technician, I would like to throw some cautionary advice to those who plan to start tearing behind wall jacks in hotels.

If you tear into a wall and you hook up alligator clips to the room next door, you have just created a wiretap, which is a federal felony. The risks are not worth it. Spend the extra money for a hotel with data jacks in the room. Small-hotel owners would not like you stripping their wires.

Gregor Hinckley
San Diego, California
74217,1234

"Top 10 Tips for Road Warriors," which advises hotel guests to remove telephone wall plates, strip wires, etc., when they can't get modem access, ignores the fact that they are damaging private property and potentially rendering the phone unusable for the next guest. I am a hotel owner, and while I understand the point about "mom and pop" hotels not having the most accessible phone systems, I can't believe you would encourage readers to strip wires in the wall! You didn't even suggest that they re-insulate the wires when finished!

Our hotel has a modern "modem-accessible" phone system with RJ-11 jacks in each room, but if I find any stripped wires, may I send you the repair bill?

Gordon Minns
The Davy Jackson Inn
Jackson Hole, Wyoming
76360,3301

I am puzzled that Cathryn Conroy ignored the versatility of the HP 95/100/200LX palmtop computers in "No-Office Computing." It does not take many visits to the HP Handhelds Forum to realize that this is much more than "just a gadget" with a small keyboard.

Ms. Conroy writes that "palmtop computers are primarily for data retrieval" and "you may only be able to use the preinstalled software." The HP 95/100/200LX palmtop has DOS 5.0 built in. This means some of the older DOS software (i.e., dBaseIII) can run on the HP palmtops. In addition, the software mentioned on p. 18 is a fraction of the software available for this computer.

Jan L. Frandsen
Cleveland, Ohio
70402,3401

Computer Viruses

I think it was time for the article "Viruses: Gone or Just Forgotten?" (October, p. 28). I have managed the Computer Virus Research Lab in Germany for five years and published a book about computer viruses. Most computer users have a false sense of security if they believe a virus can't hit them.

When we detected Neurobasher and published a warning, it took only five days to receive infection messages from 20 cities in Germany. Most of those people had no idea about data security or virus awareness. I would like to see more coverage of data-security topics.

Howard Fuhs
Wiesbaden-Biebrich, Germany
100120,503

Jan Smith's article on viruses was just the shot in the arm I needed to start being more careful about viruses. Many people have become complacent about viruses because of the lack of publicity. I hope there is a follow-up article.

David C. Bedard
Friedrichshafen, Germany
100377,2420

I was disappointed to read that *CompuServe Magazine* permits revisionist history. Jan Smith's "Viruses: Gone or Just Forgotten?" reports Richard Ford's claim that "the first computer virus was discovered in 1986." Hogwash. David Ferbrache's book *A Pathology of Computer Viruses* documents the Elk Cloner virus for the Apple II in mid-1981 (to say nothing of an experimental virus written in 1980 but never unleashed on the public).

The Dellinger virus, the Hauser virus, Lee's Diskitis, and the INIT virus all attacked Apple II's DOS 3.3—not to be confused with MS-DOS 3.3—before 1986. It's not something the Apple II community is proud of, but it is a fact.

Douglas Cuff
Editor, *A2-Central* magazine
London, Ontario
73557,105

Digital News

In the article "It's News to Me" (November, p. 10), Chris Galvin postulates that access to "instant" (or nearly so) news sources, such as raw feeds from wire services, gives the user a more complete picture of the world around him. Up to a point that's true. However, there are some built-in filters even in these organizations.

I am a correspondent for Reuters, arguably the world's largest and most respected news-gathering organization. When I cover a story (mostly high-profile trials), I am physically there. I generate thousands of words a day, but most of them stay in my head because of the brevity inherent in the wire-service format. My point is that even a "raw" wire service isn't so raw.

Don't forget that editors also decide which stories will be carried, what their order of precedence will be, and when they will move on the wire (misnomer: the "wire" in wire service today is really a satellite transponder). The only way the reader, the news junkie, can get the full picture is to be there. Clearly an impossible task. The filterers are everywhere.

Arjay Morgan
Tampa, Florida
72377,567

To respond to the quote in the news article from Cort Lannin, who resides in the Netherlands, that English news is "a rarity," I say his statement is a distortion, no more, no less.

I live across the border in Belgium, and have been well informed on a timely basis by English-language news sources for the past 15 years. Cable TV brings two BBC channels, CNN and NBC's Super Channel. In addition, there are English radio broadcasts (both public and private), AFN, and, for satellite-dish owners, a variety of news sources too long to list. Plus, there's CompuServe's own wide array of news agencies.

Eric Dauchy
Berloz, Belgium
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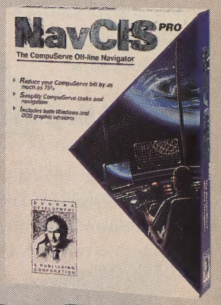

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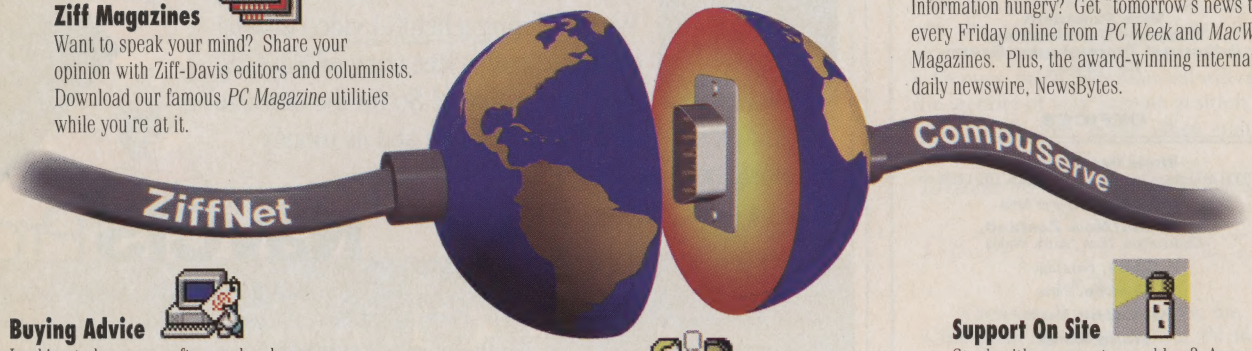

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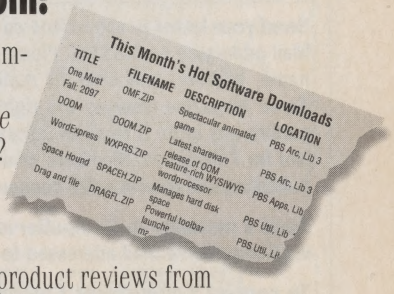

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MONITOR

Vacation Vocations

Looking for a job in an industry with a future? Think travel.

Companies that serve travelers constituted the world's number-one work sector and employed 200 million people worldwide in 1994, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council.

To learn more about such job opportunities and ask questions of professionals in the hotel and restaurant businesses, check out the new "Hotel Industry Pro" section and library of the Inn and Lodging Forum (GO INNFORUM).

Led by James Milnes, director of Golden Gate University's hotel-administration program, with significant input from Cornell University's School of Hotel Management, this section provides career information, salary statistics, résumé-writing help, lists of hotel schools worldwide, contact names and addresses at major hotel and restaurant chains, and more.

"The network potential is incredible," says Pamela Lanier, the author of 10 travel books and a sysop of the Inn and Lodging Forum. "We foresee many job leads appearing in the forum as messages before they ever go out through more conventional channels."

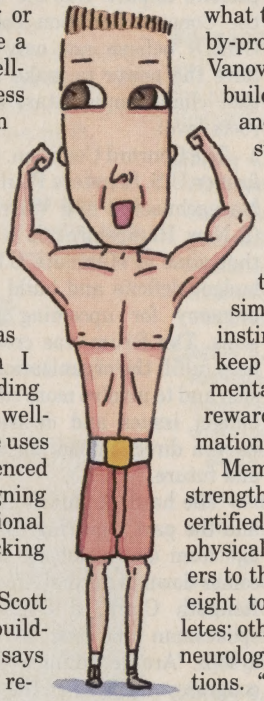
The libraries feature not only articles from leading industry publications, such as the *Cornell Quarterly* and *Hotel and Motel Management*, but also original articles from industry experts on any number of topics, including marketing strategies and renovations.

Monitor

Contributors: Cathryn Conroy, John Edwards, Lindsy Van Gelder

Never Too Late to Pump Up

Whether you're into bodybuilding or are merely looking to undertake a light renovation, you'll find well-muscled support in the Health & Fitness Forum's (GO GOODHEALTH) Section 12, "Body Building."



PAUL FISCH

Member Michael McDermott believes that just about anyone can benefit from bodybuilding. "I'm 42 and had not participated in this sport previously," he says. "A sporadic skier, runner, and softball player, I would characterize myself as having been in lousy shape when I started." McDermott says bodybuilding has improved his overall health and well-being as well as his mental outlook. He uses the forum to get advice from experienced bodybuilders on everything from designing workout programs to choosing nutritional supplements to finding the best tracking software.

After several false starts, member Scott Vanover has been consistently bodybuilding for the past several months. He says he's already beginning to see positive results. "You look better, feel better, learn what to eat and what not to eat, and, as a by-product, chicks will dig you." But Vanover cautions newcomers that bodybuilding takes a lot of mental dedication and discipline. "It is not an overnight-success type of thing," he says.

Member Josh McCrory advises that moderation is the key to a successful bodybuilding regimen. "I don't try to attain some unrealistic goal of looking like Superman. I simply go at my own pace and follow my instincts," he says. "I try, above all, to keep it productive and fun. To me, the mental transformation has been the most rewarding part, with the physical transformation a nice side benefit."

Member J. P. Montalvan, a certified strength and conditioning specialist and a certified personal trainer, says age and physical condition aren't necessarily barriers to the sport. He works with clients aged eight to 94. Several are professional athletes; others live with a variety of orthopedic, neurologic, cardiovascular, and other conditions. "We are proud of the outstanding progress made by all," he says.

Getting the Words Out, Live

Imagine being able to attend a speech, in real time, via computer. It happened last fall when Jack Boenau, president of AmeriCaption Inc. and a Court Reporters Forum (GO CRFORUM) member, transmitted a speech on the information superhighway to the forum's conference area as it was being given by U.S. Vice President Al Gore in Washington, D.C. As rapidly as the vice president spoke, Boenau flawlessly captured each word in machine shorthand.

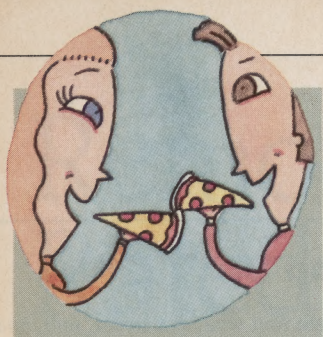
The machine shorthand was instantaneously translated into English, reformatted, and transmitted live to the conference area, one line at a time. The total elapsed time from when a word was spoken to when conference participants read it on their monitors was a few seconds.

"This first-time, near-instantaneous transmission of spoken words via CompuServe conferencing is a revolutionary development with enormous potential, integrating the court-reporting profession with online communications," says Richard Sherman, a court reporter for 27 years and sysop of the Court Reporters Forum. "No technology, including computerized voice recognition, is capable of the speed, accuracy, and vocabulary of a professional real-time reporter."

The system that makes this possible is the Gemini keyboard from Cheetah Systems Inc. in Fremont, California. The keyboard allows those with court-reporting skills to enter data or text into a variety of computer programs at speeds of more than 260 words a minute with 99 percent accuracy. For Gore's speech, the words were fed into TAPCIS, but the keyboard also works with CIM, WinCIM, a word processor, database manager, or spreadsheet.

To learn more about this system, visit the Court Reporters Forum.

CYNDY PATRICK



PAUL FISCH

It's Like Cool, Huh-Huh

Where on CompuServe can you find files that will help you discover pizza's hidden secrets, clear up your skin, and provide a surefire excuse for missing school? In the Students' Forum's (GO STUFO) Library 5, "Teens Club," of course, where being caught between childhood and adulthood is more than a state of mind, it's an attitude.

Among the library's gems are:

The Book on Pizza—A presentation of the new Pizza Theory and statistical information on pizza. PIZZA.TXT (13,365 bytes).

No More Pimples for Windows—A shareware hypertext file that helps readers clear up their complexion. NPIMPL.ZIP (128,460 bytes).

No More Pimples for Mac—A Macintosh version of the clear-skin shareware. NPIMPL.SIT (114,688 bytes).

Driver's Edge—A DOS multiple-choice driving quiz designed for use by high-school students. DRIVER.ZIP (35,160 bytes).

Christmas Carols With Physics-Class Lyrics—In which "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" becomes "Bunson, the Blue-Flamed Burner," among others. PHYCRL.TXT (17,195 bytes).

Fun Answers Students Gave on Tests—Off-the-wall answers students actually gave on examinations. TSTFUN.TXT (3,350 bytes).

The World According to Student Bloopers—A "history of the world" as pasted together from student bloopers. BLOOPS.TXT (12,353 bytes).

A Push to Fill in the U.S.'s Bottomless Pit of Debt

With annual U.S. federal budget deficits soaring through the ionosphere and the national debt now as deep as the furrows on a banker's brow, many ordinary United States citizens feel increasingly powerless to make any positive impact. But the members who meet in the Concord Coalition Forum (GO CONCORD) believe not only that citizens have the power to make a change but that change must start at the grassroots level.

The Concord Coalition, co-chaired by former U.S. Senators Paul Tsongas (D-Massachusetts) and Warren Rudman (R-New Hampshire), is a movement that aims to eliminate U.S. federal budget deficits and build a sound economy for upcoming generations. The forum was created to help fulfill the organization's mission and to involve more citizens in budget issues and decisions that have a direct impact on their lives and future.

"The hardest part of our message, and the part requiring the most courage from our members, is that it all comes down to normal Americans," says Kenneth Clark, a Concord Coalition spokesman and one of the forum's sysops. "Are we willing to support our congresspersons when they are bombarded by people protecting unnecessary entitlements?"

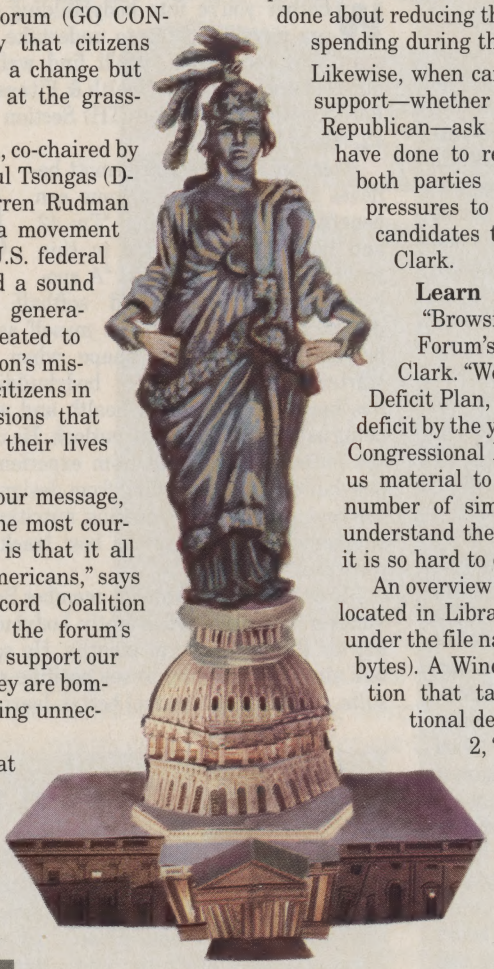
Clark suggests that people work to effect change in the following ways:

Press members of Congress to address entitlement spending and all decisions that increase the deficit. "This can be done through letters, phone calls, or by asking questions when members of Congress have public meetings," says Clark. "The question most often asked is, 'What have you done about reducing the deficit and entitlement spending during this term?' "

Likewise, when candidates come calling for support—whether they are Democrat or Republican—ask them again what they have done to reduce the deficit. "Since both parties are equally affected by pressures to spend more, we ask all candidates the same question," says Clark.

Learn about the issues. "Browsing the Concord Coalition Forum's libraries is helpful," says Clark. "We have the text of the Zero Deficit Plan, one plan to eliminate the deficit by the year 2000. In addition, the Congressional Budget Office often gives us material to upload. We also offer a number of simulations to help people understand the budget process and why it is so hard to cut the deficit."

An overview of the Zero Deficit Plan is located in Library 1, "Citizen Coalition," under the file name ZDPVIE.TXT (11,931 bytes). A Windows Debt Clock simulation that tallies the increasing national debt is available in Library 2, "USA—In the Red," under the file name USDEBT.ZIP (468,578 bytes).



BRIAN BEHNKE

WORLD UPDATE

Europe Rail Info, Hong Kong Forum Available

European railway schedules are now available on CompuServe (GO BAHN or GO RAILWAY). The schedules, provided by the Deutsche Bahn, allow members to look up railway schedules for all of Europe and access additional information about European rail service. Members with a permanent address in Germany can make seat reservations and purchase tickets online, which will be sent to them by mail.

The Hong Kong Forum (GO HKFORUM) is open for those with an interest in Hong Kong and China. Whether you're a resident, ex-resident, potential visitor, or just fascinated by one of the world's largest and busiest cities, visit this forum for information and discussion. Message-section topics include travel, eating and drinking, entertainment, doing business, and the job market. Forum libraries contain GIF images of the region, tourist information, and reviews from *HK Magazine*, the definitive guide to Hong Kong.

The German MACup Verlag Forum (GO MACUP) is the hot line between readers of the MACup magazines and its editors. The forum offers the latest news about Apple's Macintosh line plus new software and game files. Interact with other readers, editors, and VIPs from the industry's leading companies. Most documents in the forum libraries are in Adobe Acrobat 2.0 format (PDF) but can also be read by Acrobat 1.0 readers. The Acrobat 2.0 reader can be downloaded soon from Library 13, "Starterkit."

Buying Software? Here's Some Stuff to Not Consider

There's nothing like spending a day, evening—heck, even an entire weekend—at a computer superstore shopping for software.

I love to wheel that little red shopping cart through the auto-opening doors of my local CompAmericaCity SuperWareHousePlus and undertake some serious software shopping. If I had a child, and if those little red carts came with a child seat, I would even take the kid along with me—that's how much I love software shopping.

It takes a discerning eye to spot the premier software packages. While compatibility and overall usefulness are relatively important factors, there are several other key considerations one must heed. The first thing I look for in a software product is the box's shrink-wrapping, which must be as tight as a drum. (I like to run my fingernail along the edge of the box to test for tightness.) Loose shrink-wrapping means air can invade the box, causing the disks to go stale. That's critical. A stale, moldy floppy might crumble in your computer's disk drive, leading to a whole bunch of problems. Disk crumbs inside a PC, for example, will breed germs, disease, and an odor not unlike northern New Jersey on an August afternoon.

A seal of approval is a good sign of product quality. The imprimatur should come from a publication you have never heard of. ("Copy Editor's Selection Award, 5,000 Years Running, *Micro DeskTop Computer Age.*") I, personally, will only buy a product that has a platinum or gold seal of approval. Silver seals are OK, but the software might give you trouble if you attempt to run it on a VIC 20, TRS-80 Model I, or HP LaserJet IIID. For fairly obvious reasons, I would never, ever buy a product that carries only a bronze seal. It's just not worth the risk. 'Nuff said.

A quote paid and delivered from a noted and respected computer author/columnist/lecturer/seminar producer/undersecretary of state is another sure sign of everlasting software quality. ("I like this program. It works good. I read software boxes while eating breakfast"—J. Snapply Finnagery, *Micro DeskTop Computer Age.*)

I always take the time to look for the phrase "easy to use" on the box, because I certainly wouldn't want to buy a program that's "hard to use." I also feel reassured when I see a box bearing the four most heartwarming words in the English language: "As Seen on TV." As far as I'm concerned, if a software product is good enough to be on TV, it's good enough to grace my computer desktop.

On the other hand (left or right, it makes no difference), I try to stay away from software published in California, Oregon, or Washington. The way I see it, the West Coast is three hours behind the East Coast, and I only want the latest version of a program. If a computer user buys a product from the West Coast, he (or she, it makes no difference) may regret the decision in an hour or two when some smart guy in Boston comes out with a new and better version.

I hope these tips will help you select the best software for your computer.

For more BTS gems by John Edwards, GO OLT-130. Edwards is a contributing editor of CompuServe Magazine. *His CompuServe User ID number is 70007,412.*

Cyberspace and the New Soul

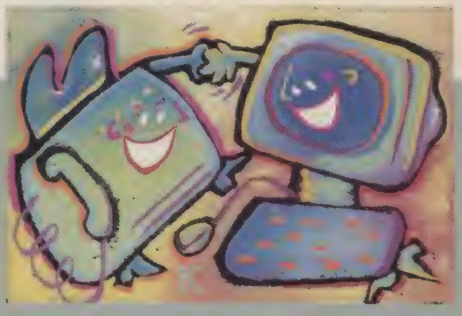
Is the world as we know it coming to an end? Is cyberspace paving the way for a new type of reality? Can people's unspoken thoughts influence reality? These are some of the questions being considered by *Magical Blend*, a Chico, California–based publication that has established its online presence in the New Age Forum (GO NEWAGE).

Magical Blend's editors and writers—and many of its readers—believe that society is undergoing a fundamental transformation. They feel that a new world is being born, and whether this birth will be easy or difficult depends largely on individuals. *Magical Blend*'s aim is to chart the course of the upcoming transformation and to help its readers cope with and contribute to the birthing process.

"We have been publishing *Magical Blend* for 15 years," says Michael Peter Langevin, the magazine's editor and co-publisher. "In that time we have grappled with the essence of what soul and spirit are and the meaning of existence. We've searched as well for explanations of why the creative process is so basically important to meaning and what the changes that are going on in our society might mean and where they might be going."

Langevin believes that the information superhighway can be viewed as a new dimension of the soul. "There is a basic communion that takes place," he says. "The communion is different than a letter or telephone conversation. It has many different dimensions and more potential for continued existence and growth."

To find out more about *Magical Blend*, visit the New Age Forum's Section 12, "Magical Blend." To read or download back issues, articles, event calendars, and other material, check out the forum's Library 4, "Magical Blend."



A Scanner in Your Midst?

Face the fax: these machines do more than what their name suggests. If you've got a stand-alone fax machine and a fax modem attached to your PC, you have another piece of office equipment you may not have realized.

Several members of the IBM Communications Forum (GO IBMCOM) recently put one and one together and realized that because fax machines create "files" in a TIFF format, anyone who has a fax modem and graphics software that opens TIFF documents can use the stand-alone machine as a scanner. Users with two phone lines have it best—they simply have their stand-alone machine call their fax modem and send it through (although, as one forum member warned, it's crucial to put the scanned material into the machine absolutely straight).

For people with one phone line, the options are a little trickier, but depending on the equipment, a fax-to-fax connection is possible. It can be accomplished by using a two-line simulator and a line-voltage device (available at some computer stores) that fits into the phone line between the fax and the fax modem. The most foolproof approach, however, is simply having two lines.

KRISTEN MILEA

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CUSPD794

GO OLI for more information.

TOOL ZONE

by Gregor Gilliom

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES GARY

FEATURE

Where to GO

Amiga User Forum
GO AMIGAUSER

Association of Shareware Professionals Forum
GO ASPFORUM

Computer Consultant's Forum
GO CONSULT

File Finder
GO FILEFINDER

HP Handhelds Forum
GO HPHAND

IBM Hardware Forum
GO IBMHW

IBMNET Forums
GO IBMNET

MAUG Forums
GO MAUG

Novell Connectivity Forum
GO NCONNECT

Windows Fun Forum
GO WINFUN

Windows Shareware Forum
GO WINSHARE

Shareware Utilities: Why They're Written, Where to Find Them Online, How They Change the Way You Compute

You hear it all the time—how shareware utilities are a godsend to computer users. How they make computing easier, more efficient, or just plain more interesting. How they're inexpensive (and sometimes *free*) and, best of all, that thousands of them are available to CompuServe members, a mere download away.

But have you ever wondered what a computer utility actually is? Or where to find one? Or how to download it and get it to work?

Let's start with the basics. Computer utilities have nothing to do with knives, belts, power lines, or infielders. In the world of personal computing, the term has a meaning all its own. Simply put, utilities are modest-size programs that accomplish specific tasks unique to computing. The root of the word "utility" is the Latin term *utilitus*, meaning "useful," so despite other modern connotations, its place in computing is quite close to its origin.

Traditional applications, say most utility authors, serve a purpose that has existed and will

Gregor Gilliom is senior editor of CompuServe Magazine. *His CompuServe User ID number is 70004,4260.*

Do any of the shareware utilities described in this cover story sound interesting? We've made it easier for you to hunt them down online. This index is an alphabetical listing of the utilities mentioned (in boldface) throughout this special feature—simply enter the Go command in parentheses below to get to the forum where the utility appears. Then search for the file name. If the forum name is preceded by "ZiffNet" or "ZiffNet/Mac," ZiffNet membership is required.

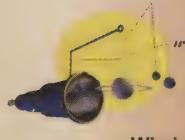
NOTE: Because many utilities are written for more than one operating system, the following locations may not be the only places these programs can be found online. If one sounds interesting to you but your computer uses a different platform, try searching in forums for your O.S. Also note that often several versions of utilities exist online, and updated versions may have been uploaded since press time.

100BUDDY
BUD100.ZIP
HP Handhelds Forum
(GO HPHAND)
Library 11,
"100/200LX General"

4DOS
4DOS4P.ZIP
IBM Systems/Utilities
Forum
(GO IBMSYS)
Library 1, "DOS Utilities"

Allpaper
ALLPAP.ZIP
ZiffNet and PC Magazine
Programming Forum
(GO PROGRAMMING)
Library 2, "Utilities Code"

Astronomy Lab
ALW201.ZIP
IBM Applications Forum
(GO IBMAPP)
Library 13,
"Tech/Engr/Sci"



CD Boxer
CDBOX.ZIP
Windows Fun Forum
(GO WINFUN)
Library 10, "Graphic Utils"

According to shareware reviewer Michael Callahan, a.k.a. Dr. File Finder, the first personal-computer utilities started circulating in early 1983 and, like their hardware brethren, accomplished very basic tasks, such as increasing the size of keyboard buffers and stripping extra bits out of WordStar files.

continue to exist in the world, like writing letters, maintaining ledgers, and drawing plans. Utilities bolster the systems or applications that make these tasks easier via computer, like copying a file, sending it to a printer, or rescuing an unsaved version. "Utilities are programs that help you get more out of your computer, as opposed to helping you do traditionally *non*-computer-related tasks," says Chuck Steenburgh, a utility developer and president of Lexington, Virginia–based Tay-Jee software. "A word processor is not a utility, because it helps you produce and manage documents, which are things you don't *have* to use a computer for. A memory manager is a utility, because without a computer there's no need for it." Graphic viewers, such as **GIFConverter** and **JPEGView**, and compression programs, including the touchstone **PKZip**, are perfect examples of utilities that, though seemingly indispensable, aren't the least bit effective away from a desktop home.

"Utilities do one thing very well," says Eric Bergman-Terrell, a part-time utility programmer in Greenwood Village, Colorado. Two of the six utilities he's written, **MIDI JukeBox** and **Talking Clock**, do nothing more than help users get more out of their sound cards.

"They're tools that increase your enjoyment of computing by giving you power over your system in a way you didn't have before," says Rochester, New York–based Pat Chefalo, writer of **Draggin' Viewer**, a drag-and-drop application-launching utility for Windows. "Empowerment is a big topic these days —people want it. Utilities empower users."

Thus, utilities as disparate as **Compact Pro**, a shareware file compressor, and **PopChar**, a humble Macintosh font enhancement, are all lumped under one grand umbrella term. They're not applications, though they can accomplish significant tasks and are supported by thorough documentation; they're not entertainment, although many incorporate button interfaces and punny names such as **Trash Free-K!** and **KeyQuencer**.

By now, most everyone uses a utility, whether he realizes it or not. If you've ever used **4DOS** to execute basic commands instead of Microsoft's clunky COMMAND.COM, or relied on **Windowshade** to unclutter your Mac desktop, you did it with a utility. Some utilities are so commonplace and effective at filling holes in operating systems that PC manufacturers buy them up and package them with machines sold off the shelf. Once downloadable shareware sensations, **SuperClock**, Windowshade, and **SCSI Probe** are now standard issue with Apple's System 7.5. "Some were so basic, so essential and useful, that Apple ultimately incorporated them, because everyone was using them anyway," says Robert Seaver, a MicroNetworked Apple Users Group (MAUG) library sysop. The same is true for DOS: PKZip is now included with many machines pre-retail.

Downloadable utilities aren't the only game in town, of course—hundreds of commercial titles, such as Adobe Type Manager, AfterDark, and Now Utilities, are steady retail and mail-order sellers. But in many cases similar shareware can be downloaded for much less money. "Often a little gem will cost little or nothing and will do the needed job better than the higher-priced product," says David Byington, a physician and part-time shareware writer. His Windows security utilities, including **Keepout** and **OverSeer PMS**, compete with established commercial packages.

Why They Thrive

Because they exist solely to add functionality to the computer, the best utilities use as little memory as possible. And not just because memory hogging would be counter to the mission. "Because a utility is chiefly about controlling the computer or its software or other files, it should not be limited by the mode of access," says Bob Eyer, a Toronto, Ontario–based utility author and computer consultant. "All needed utilities should be so small that they may be placed on a single bootable floppy disk of the smallest size, so that it's not necessary to use them only on hard disk. A good utility programmer should always have the BBS sysop and computer technician in mind."

Eyer practices what he preaches. His **MV 3.0**, a file-mover utility sensitive to DOS wild-card shortcuts, requires less than 10K of memory, and he's written DOS utilities using as little as 1K. Eyer has proved that a lot can be crammed into a tiny package: unsatisfied with several large-memory shareware BBS managers available online, he designed a smaller one, **HOST**, that still offers mail, chat, file transfer, and other communications services.

Pinpointing what drives the creation of utilities is something of a chicken-and-egg quandary: Are utilities necessary to supplement the handful of operating systems that all computer users share, or are they written to fill the cracks in the cornucopia of applications that run on those systems? It's no easier determining why authors are compelled to write them, either—ask three programmers and you'll get three different answers. Some write them for a client's needs, others for their own. Some do it as a creative outlet in an otherwise gray corporate existence. Some do it for the recognition, others for the registration dollars, others yet because they're simply generous.

"I think the single biggest motivation is: 'I need this one stupid thing done and there isn't anything else that can do it!' " says Scott Wenzel, a utility author and head of Galapagos Development in Red Lion, Pennsylvania. When advanced users find a seemingly obscure need (often a shortcut), they, in the words of one writer, "get out the compilers and tools and roll their own." In many cases their need wasn't solitary: "After the blast of self-interest," says Wenzel, "a good programmer will start wondering if anyone else in the world has had the same problem, and will post it to CIS or BBS systems."

Wenzel has written utilities that range in function and necessity. His **WinDirex** deletes files from a

How to Find Utilities Using the File Finders

So, you've discovered a particular point of inconvenience with your operating system or well-known application and want a utility that provides a quick fix. Or you'd like to go utility trolling, just to see what's out there ready to dress up your desktop. Where do you cast your line?

CompuServe's various File Finders (GO FILEFINDER) are good places to begin because these comprehensive databases permit the scanning of many forums (more than 180, in the case of the PC File Finder) related to your hardware. They search through thousands of uploaded files in one fell swoop, producing a number of "Current Selections" that meet all your criteria and a list of files that can be displayed or narrowed if needed. The various search categories below can be used in combination to great advantage.

Keyword

This is the most productive search criterion you can use because it describes the type of utility you seek. In some cases, one keyword may be descriptive enough to produce a manageable number of database "hits"—if you're looking for a more functional desktop file-deletion device, for example, typing TRASH will produce a list limited to snazzy deletion programs, because TRASH doesn't have other connotations in the computing realm.

File Finders permit the entry of up to three keywords, and only files that use *all* of these words to define them will make your list. This helps when the only keywords you can think of are more general in nature. If you're looking for, say, a printer formatting utility, using PRINTER or FORMAT by itself might very well produce current selections numbering in the hundreds, many of them unrelated to your needs (such as information files and drivers). When used together, however, perhaps even with a third keyword, UTILITY, a more targeted and shorter list will result, cutting back your browsing time. Bear in mind that less is more: as the number of keywords used increases, the likelihood that the uploader used the same keywords in describing the utility decreases, as does your chance of finding the perfect program. In most cases, two keywords will suffice.

Submission Date

The other really productive criterion that can be used is the date a utility was uploaded. If you're interested only in the most recently uploaded programs (helpful in the few forums that don't delete older versions of a shareware title) or can't otherwise pare a large number of current selections down, try setting the submission date to six months, one year, or two years ago. Dates should be entered in the month/day/year format.

Forum Name

This criterion lets you narrow your search to one forum's libraries, so it's helpful only when you already know what forum(s) you should be searching individually, namely a vendor-specific forum. Thus, if you're looking for a utility that performs a particular function for Adobe's Illustrator, limiting your search to the Adobe Forum (GO ADOBE) is a smart move. Also, if your chosen keyword (for instance, the obvious UTILITY) produces a ridiculously long list, choosing this criterion and selecting a forum devoted entirely or in part to utilities (such as the IBM Systems/Utilities Forum [GO IBMSYS]) will narrow things down quite a bit.

File Extension

If you insist on the shorter download times that compressed uploads provide, you can use this option to narrow your list down to only those files having an extension such as ZIP, ARC, SIT, or SEA.

File Name

This criterion is useful in the case (such as an offhand mention in a forum message) that you already know an upload's file name but not the forum in which it resides.

File Submitter

If a utility author has recommended some of his creations to you online, or you're so impressed by a previous utility that you're wondering what other goodies he's placed online, use this criterion for your search. Enter the author's User ID—the result will be a list of his uploads.

Once you've found a comfortable number of current selections to browse, choose the Display Selected Titles option to view short file abstracts. If a utility's name catches your eye, select the abstract to see the full file description, which includes the Go command of its forum, library name and number, and file size. Users of later versions of CompuServe's Information Manager software (DOSCIM 2.0 or higher, MacCIM 1.6 or higher, CIM for OS/2, or WinCIM) have the option of downloading the utility directly from the File Finder.

Happy hunting!

—Christopher J. Galvin

Comment
COM306.ZIP
IBM New Users Forum
(GO IBMNEW)
Library 8,
"Word&Card Games"

Compact Pro
CPTPRO.SEA
UK Computing Forum
(GO UKCOMP)
Library 10, "Macintosh"

Construction
CNSTSS.ZIP
ZiffNet PBS Utilities
Forum
(GO PBSUTIL)
Library 8,
"Ziff Custom Utils"

Draggin' Viewer
DRAGGN.ZIP
Windows Shareware
Forum
(GO WINSHARE)
Library 2,
"File Apps/Utils"

DragonDrop
DRAGDP.SIT
ZiffNet/Mac Download &
Support Forum
(GO DOWNTECH)
Library 1, "Ziffware"

Frequent Files
FREQFI.ZIP
ZiffNet PBS Utilities
Forum
(GO PBSUTIL)
Library 8,
"Ziff Custom Utils"

Gates Does Windows
GATWIN.ZIP
ZiffNet Computer
Shopper Forum
(GO COMPSHOPPER)
Library 1,
"General Information"

GIFConverter
GIFCNV.SEA
Graphics Support Forum
(GO GRAPHSUP)
Library 3,
"Graphic Viewers"

HOST
HOST3.ZIP
IBM Bulletin Board
Forum
(GO IBMBBS)
Library 1,
"BBS Programs"

IDE Identify
IDEID.ZIP
IBM Hardware Forum
(GO IBMHW)
Library 1,
"Disk/Disk Utils"

directory list, while **CD Boxer** is a template for homemade compact-disc jewel-box labels. **VGA Snowstorm**, which creates falling snow that piles up at the base of a screen, was written for users in warm climes who miss the change of seasons. Wenzel wrote it on a whim several winters ago; to his surprise, it's been downloaded more than 1,900 times. He estimates that his most popular utility, **Comment**, a simple diversion that randomly spits out famous or bizarre quotations, has been downloaded more than 8,000 times from CompuServe alone. The utility has brought him correspondence from around the world, including a college professor who modified the program to use as a flashcard-style drill for chemistry students, and a priest in Puerto Rico who asked for a version "without the off-color stuff."

For those who like programming for its own sake, Q&A columns in computer magazines and postings in various CompuServe forums provide plenty of challenges. That's where, says Marc Perkel, president of Springfield, Missouri–based Computer Tyme, programmers can "see what utilities people are asking for and can't find. If there isn't one that meets their needs, they might consider writing it."

Input
INPUTX.ZIP
IBM Systems/Utilities Forum
(GO IBMSYS)
Library 1, "DOS Utilities"

JPEGView
JPEGVF.SIT
Mac Applications Forum
(GO MACAP)
Library 9, "Graphics Tools"

Keepout
KEEP25.ZIP (Windows)
IBM Systems/Utilities Forum
(GO IBMSYS)
Library 3, "General Utils"

KeyQuencer
KEYQUE.SIT
ZiffNet/Mac Download & Support Forum
(GO DOWNTECH)
Library 20, "Shareware Awards"

MarxMenu
MXMENU.EXE
Novell Vendor Forum
(GO NOVVEN)
Library 3, "Computer Tyme"

MIDI JukeBox
MIDIJB.ZIP
MIDI/Music Forum
(GO MIDIFORUM)
Library 11, "Windows Media Sound"

MV 3.0
MV30.ZIP
IBM Systems/Utilities Forum
(GO IBMSYS)
Library 6, "File Utilities"

OverSeer PMS
PMS.ZIP
IBM Systems/Utilities Forum
(GO IBMSYS)
Library 2, "OS/2 Utilities"

PeeWee's Secret Word
PWSW.SEA
Mac Entertainment Forum
(GO MACFUN)
Library 6, "Sound Utilities"

PKZip/PKUnZip
PK204G.EXE
IBM Systems/Utilities Forum
(GO IBMSYS)
Library 6, "File Utilities"

State of Compression: De-archiving Utility Downloads

Like most applications you might download from CompuServe, the majority of utilities online are made available in a compressed "archive" format. That means the author or party responsible for uploading the program has used a shareware compression utility to compact it (along with any tutorial documentation and other Read Me files) into a significantly smaller file. This saves storage space on CompuServe's host computers and shortens the time needed for downloading. But to get your hands on the utility, you first must "unzip" or "unstuff" the file and its contents with a decompression utility that works with the download's "brand" of compression. And like the Cola Wars, the wide field of brands among the popular platforms has narrowed down to the one or two most often used.

Many forums that offer compressed files in their libraries also store the needed decompression utility, typically within one of the first two libraries. Here's a quick guide for PC and Mac users:

IBM/PC/Windows

File compression in the DOS and Windows world has pretty much defaulted to the ZIP protocol (used in files with the extension ZIP) developed by Philip Katz and most commonly utilized in PKWare's PKZip and PKUnZip programs. The most recent versions—needed to de-archive ZIP files uploaded in the last two years—are available in one file in the PC Vendor C Forum's (GO PCVENC) Library 11, "PKWare," as PK204G.EXE.

A number of programmers have tried to improve on these programs over the years by developing DOS and Windows shells that make using them easier for those unfamiliar with the DOS command line. One such program, StupenDOS, is in the aforementioned library as SD400.EXE. Windows interfaces are available in the Windows Shareware Forum's (GO WINSHARE) Library 2, "File Apps/Utils" (search using the keyword PKZIP).

But, as IBMNET sysop Don Watkins notes, late 1994 brought true Windows applications that don't ride on top of PKZip or PKUnZip as the shells do. The most popular by far? A utility named WinZip (see "Hits Parade," on p. 19). "It seems to be the best-supported program with the least amount of trouble," says Watkins. Aside from ZIP files, WinZip also decompresses files using older DOS formats ARC, ARJ, and LHA, which once stole PKWare's thunder by besting its early compression scheme and being freeware. Since its source code was freely distributed, Watkins says, LHA survives among DOS hackers and the Amiga and UNIX communities to which it was ported.

Some ZIPped files having an EXE extension are "self-extracting": they already contain the code needed for extraction and require you only to run the program from the command line, dumping the file's components into the same directory in which the archive resides. This method adds a fair amount of size to the upload, so it's not used as often.

Macintosh

Some compressed Mac files, those with the extension SEA, are uploaded as self-extracting archives, created using Bill Goodman's AutoExtractor, Aladdin Systems' StuffIt, or other programs. To decompress the file, you merely double-click on its icon and indicate the "destination folder" on your hard disk or mounted diskette where you'd like the resulting program or folder to go. Says Neil Shapiro, chief sysop of the MAUG forums, "We accept SEA files no matter what their program of origin, on the theory that no one needs a program to make them work."

But StuffIt (used in files with the SIT extension) by and large is the compression scheme of choice. Aladdin's newest decompression program, StuffIt Expander 3.5.1, is freeware and also unstuffs Compact Pro archives (files with the CPT extension) found online. It's available in the Macintosh C Vendor Forum's (GO MACCVEN) Library 2, "Aladdin Systems," as STUFEX.SEA.

When Mac users run across a ZIPped file containing DOS-based text that they'd like to read, they can turn to Aladdin's shareware add-on to Expander, DropStuff with Expander Enhancer, found in the aforementioned library as DRPSTF.INS. Or use the freeware application UnZip, available in the Macintosh New Users Help Forum's (GO MACHELP) Library 3, "Using LIBs," as UZ201.CPT. Other programs in this small library will decompress formats from the Mac's early years, including ArcMac (ARC files) and PackIt (PIT files).

Mac files with the BIN extension are binary and not compressed; the application is instantly available after the download.

—CJG

Their work doesn't stop at finding a means to an end, however. "We like to write the perfect utility to do the job," says Perkel. "It's got to be bug-free. It's got to look right. It's got to have all the right features. You just keep improving it as users come up with new ideas and feature requests. Writing utilities is a form of art." One utility he wrote, **MarxMenu**, created originally as a menu system for DOS, has evolved into a system-programming language for networks and has more than 1,000 commands.

Perkel's art analogy isn't a bad one: like many artists, utility programmers create largely for creation's sake rather than out of capitalistic yearning. If they weren't getting paid at all, they'd still write the code for personal satisfaction. "It's hard to explain to investment bankers that there's a real market need for a utility that converts sounds from UNIX machines to Sharp Wizards," says Wenzel. Thus, shareware developers fend for themselves, hoping users will register their work and thank them with a modest sum of money, usually less than $20. This "try before you buy" philosophy is the ultimate in consumer rights—users who like the program pay for it, users who don't simply throw it away.

Unfortunately, the registration cash doesn't add up to much. Many programmers say a disappointingly low percentage of downloaders send the nominal thank-you check requested. "The last time I checked, the registrations per download were extremely small," says Atlanta, Georgia–based Mike Grice, author of **ResDuet+** and **Plain Ol' Button Bar**, among others. "If I were doing this for a living, or even for some decent extra spending money, I would starve." Unregistered users often cheat not only the authors out of a modest reward but also themselves of a valuable resource. Without the address of a registrant, developers can't follow up with revisions, bug updates, and other functions and options that make the utility more useful.

Like Marc Perkel's MarxMenu, sometimes a utility created to satisfy one interest is updated into something much more impressive. Eric Bergman-Terrell's **Astronomy Lab**, for example, was originally written to generate monthly calendars of daily sun and moon rises and sets. With enhancements, it grew to include a general-purpose astronomy predictor with graphing and simulations.

Likewise for Chuck Steenburgh's **Input**, first written as a variation of the ASK.COM file that returned a DOS error-level code at the press of a key. "After a while users began asking for things like the ability to set an environment variable, accept numeric input, and select from color attributes," says Steenburgh. One by one those features were added, "to the point where Input is a very powerful utility." Like others, many of Steenburgh's 20-plus utilities were written in response to letters and reviews in computer magazines that lamented software shortcomings. John Mancino's **TattleTech**, now a complex system-related software tool for the Macintosh, was first written as a modest programming exercise with an unusual "donorware" request: that users contribute to charity an amount greater than they would ordinarily.

Work Isn't Everything

If the best definition of a utility is something that wouldn't be performed without a computer, how does one explain the many cool utilities that help users manage time, make lists, and handle other routine tasks that they *do* do away from the computer? Easy answer: these utilities tackle the tasks that likely *wouldn't* happen without them—like memorizing important dates and organizing day-to-day life. Let's face it, computer memory is a *lot* more reliable than our own.

Never been great at remembering the birthday of even your closest friends? Tim Parish's **SkedEzy** coaxes the computer into doing the thinking for you. Parish, a Rundle Mall, Australia–based software developer, wrote the Windows scheduler to remind him to send birthday and anniversary cards, take his car in for servicing, and attend to other predictable but easy-to-overlook events. Like many utility authors, he looked for an existing program before he wrote his own, which he says he still uses every day.

More than 10,000 share- or freeware utilities like Parish's are available for members to download from libraries in places like the Amiga User Forum, the Novell Connectivity Forum, and the especially fertile IBMNET forums, which hold more utilities than any others. While some CompuServers conduct File Finder searches (see "How to Find Utilities," on p. 13) for specific needs, others simply wander various libraries in search of hidden treasure.

That's how Beverly Hills, California–based advertising writer Keith Bacon stumbled across a quirky diversion called **PeeWee's Secret Word**. Now, every time he launches his Mac, the utility randomly picks a word. If Bacon then types the word, the computer responds with a chorus of screams inspired by the twisted children's television program *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*. "It's just like the show," Bacon happily reports.

Such "fun utilities" serve little more purpose than a great purposelessness. Although advancing technology has solved the problem of image "burn-in" on newer monitors, shareware screen savers continue to abound. Sound-effect programs that let users assign clips of music or movie dialogue to routine commands (such as ejecting a disk) are likewise popular downloads because they provide a pleasing distraction for longtime users and help make newcomers more comfortable with their machines. While some users eschew giving a single byte of their resources to fluff utilities that only "junk up a system," or declare that computer audio has no place in a business setting, these "counterproductivity tools" thrive nonetheless.

Utilities such as these let users customize their PCs to reflect themselves, says William P. Mann, author of *Wasting Time With Windows* (Sams Publishing, 1993) and creator of the shareware screen saver **Screen Scenes**. "People love to personalize their own spaces," he says. "Look in your office: everyone adds personal touches to his own area. Screen savers and wallpaper let users personalize their PCs."

Virginia Schmitz, an abstract artist in Oxnard, California, has made a pastime of creating and uploading wallpaper, interchangeable works of art that decorate the background of a computer monitor. She was releasing clip art and CorelDraw! files as shareware in the Windows Fun Forum when she noticed how often Windows wallpaper utilities were being downloaded. "I started to make very unusual wallpaper tiles," says Schmitz, now known online as the Wallpaper Lady. "My first release was **Wild & Crazy Wallpapers**, and I was stunned by how wild and crazy the downloading was." Her unconventional collections include the likenesses of Persian carpets, lace, swirled marble, and molten gold. Her favorite wallpaper utility is **WWPlus**, which, among other handy commands, will change wallpapers at specified intervals.

David Swift, a musician and software consultant in Jackson, Wyoming, uses Tiger Technologies' **SpeedBeep** on his Macintosh to play randomly from about 25 custom sounds in his System folder, including musical selections by Midnight Oil, Pearl Jam, Red Hot Chili Peppers, They Might Be Giants, and Laurie Anderson. He says the utility's randomness lets him relax and enjoy working. "My idea was not to record snippets that might relate to system beeps, but rather snippets that would jog my mind, replacing any troublesome thoughts with entire songs."

Plain Ol' Button Bar
PLANBR.ZIP
IBM Systems/Utilities Forum
(GO IBMSYS)
Library 4, "Multitasking"

PopChar
POPCHA.SIT
Macintosh Systems Forum
(GO MACSYS)
Library 4,
"Control Panels"

Quikcopy
QUIKCO.ZIP
ZiffNet
Utilities/Tips Forum
(GO UTILFORUM)
Library 2,
"PC Mag Utilities"

ResDuet+
RESDUA.ZIP
IBM Systems/Utilities Forum
(GO IBMSYS)
Library 4,
"Multitasking"

SaveAs
SAVEAS.ZIP
ZiffNet PBS Utilities Forum
(GO PBSUTIL)
Library 8,
"Ziff Custom Utils"

Screen Scenes
SCRSCE.ZIP
IBM Hardware Forum
(GO IBMHW)
Library 3, "Video"

SCSI Probe
SCSIPR.SEA
Apple Support Forum
(GO APLSUP)
Library 11, "Utilities SW"

SkedEzy
SKED12.ZIP
IBM Applications Forum
(GO IBMAPP)
Library 16, "PIMs"

Smart Video Manager
WINVID.ZIP
ZiffNet PBS Utilities Forum
(GO PBSUTIL)
Library 8,
"Ziff Custom Utils"

SmilerShell
SMISHL.ZIP
Windows Shareware Forum
(GO WINSHARE)
Library 9,
"Program Mgrs"

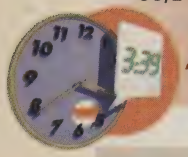
Smooth Move
SMOVE.SIT
ZiffNet/Mac MacUser Forum
(GO MACUSER)
Library 3,
"MacUser Utilities"

Space Hound
SPACEH.ZIP
Windows Shareware Forum
(GO WINSHARE)
Library 8,
"Disk Utilities"

SpeedBeep
SPDBEE.SIT
Mac Systems Forum
(GO MACSYS)
Library 4, "Control Panels"

SuperClock
SCLOCK.SEA
Apple Support Forum
(GO APLSUP)
Library 11, "Utilities SW"

Talking Clock
TCLK1.ZIP
OS/2 B Vendors Forum
(GO OS2BVEN)
Library 1,
"OS/2 Shareware"



Some believe liberal use of sound utilities, however, isn't always appropriate. "The woman in the office next to mine just loves her Icon-Hear-It program," says Computer Consultant's Forum member Michael Hayworth. "She's a mature, well-paid executive who thinks it's the cutest thing she's ever seen." Despite being a tolerant and relatively fun-loving person, Hayworth says, he is considering banning such items from his company's computers: "It drives the people around her nuts."

A Boost to Business

As colorful and engaging as sound and wallpaper programs are, most utilities meet more esoteric, workaday needs. "Utilities for business tend to be *very* under-the-hood," says programmer Scott Wenzel. "Business use of a microcomputer tends to regard the actual operation of the device as secondary to its purpose and end result."

To Horst Simon, a Los Angeles, California–based systems administrator, increasing productivity with a utility meant tracking down an unknown memory hog that slowed down his Windows machine. After exploring a few forums, he discovered **WinMap** in the Windows Shareware Forum, a utility that lists the name, location, and amount of memory being used by Windows programs, fonts, and drivers. He downloaded it, installed it, and quickly found the culprit: a video card and driver. "WinMap gave me the figures I needed to make an informed decision to buy a new video card," he says.

Erica Simmons manages the computer network at a Connecticut investment-management firm. She found her work became more efficient after she downloaded **Space Hound**, a memory-usage utility. "Previously, our Novell file server was a mess," she recalls. "File remnants, miscellaneous INI files, incorrectly installed programs, and out-of-use programs still resided on the server." Space Hound allowed her to free up disk space by getting rid of duplicate files on the network and on users' local drives to free up disk space.

Adam Englander, a systems manager in Winter Park, Florida, also relies on shareware utilities to speed up his network performance. In the IBM Hardware Forum he found **IDE Identify**, which reports the maximum data throughput of his IDE hard drive. "I used this utility and it doubled my data throughput, resulting in an incredible increase in performance on the shared hard drive on the network. I run Windows at least twice as fast as before," he says.

An added benefit of finding a utility for the workplace is the service some users get from the authors. According to Karl Reischl, a network administrator for Oshkosh Truck Corp. in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, **WINMENU** *almost* fit the bill as a menu device for his

Hot, Exclusive Stuff: ZiffNet's Utilities

For those who elect to be members of ZiffNet and ZiffNet/Mac (GO ZIFFNET), this online complement to Ziff-Davis's computer publications proves to be a treasure trove of exclusive utilities, meaning you won't find them in any other CompuServe forum, BBS, or Internet site. Custom-made to users' needs (and even requests), the utilities are often written up in Ziff titles including *PC Magazine*, *MacUser*, *Computer Shopper*, and *PC Week*. They're often given to magazine subscribers on diskettes as a premium, and are freeware for ZiffNet members, who pay just $2.95 per month and connect time. Here's an overview of the three kinds of ZiffNet exclusives.

PC Magazine Utilities

Featured each month in *PC Magazine*'s "PC Tech: Utilities" column, this is the longest-running of Ziff's various utility-of-the-month programs. It dates from the early days of the magazine, "when utilities were always things that extended your working with a pretty brain-dead DOS," says Jay Munro, a sysop in PC Magazine's Utilities and Tips Forum (GO ZNT:TIPS) and author of several featured programs. Though the emphasis now is on usability, the magazine still maintains the tradition of uploading the source code for its utilities for users interested in modifying them for their own needs or learning programming.

Written by well-known commercial-program authors, the utilities are either "useful or just cool," says Munro, citing Neil Rubenking's program that processes all letter combinations derived from a telephone number, so users can see if it "spells" anything worthwhile. Other recent utilities have included **WinPointer**, allowing those giving presentations to "draw" on top of Windows much like a sportscaster's Telestrator; **Allpaper**, which resizes wallpaper files to fit your screen; and **Quikcopy**, a replacement for the DOS command Diskcopy, which uses extended or expanded memory instead of a RAM disk, with better reporting functions.

The current *PC Magazine* Utility of the Month can be retrieved from Library 1, "PC Mag Utilities," of ZiffNet's Free Utilities Forum (GO FREEUTIL). To search for past utilities, visit Library 2, "PC Mag Utilities," of the PC Magazine's Utilities and Tips Forum.

MacUser ZiffNet/Mac Utility of the Month

These Macintosh programs, featured monthly in *MacUser*'s "New on the Menu" section, are a kind of gift to its readership and showcase one of the best things about utility programs, says Mark Simmons, a Ziff product manager and a co-producer of the utilities. "Most of these are unique tools, doing things that nobody else thought to do, or doing them in an entirely different way. The chief goal is to do things that are cool and creative rather than to replicate the standard utility suite."

The freeware is also developed from among a regular stable of programmers, including Mike Throckmorton, Bill Monk, and John and Sheila Wallace. After working with a developer for a while, Simmons and managing editor Shef Syed get an idea of their strengths and specialties, "at which point we start coming up with ideas tailored to them." After seeing (and licensing) the Wallaces' **DragonDrop** extension at the 1993 MacHack convention, Simmons and the husband-wife team have since come up with popular titles **WunderBar**, a control panel that puts a toolbar in every Finder window with buttons for commonly used

LAN, but he also needed security features and a better interface. He was pleasantly surprised that the author, Ricky Freyre, "made all the modifications I requested—and very quickly."

As valuable as utilities are to desk-occupying workstations, their functionality doesn't end there. CompuServe forums also contain a wealth of tiny programs that augment the tiniest computers, palmtops.

Visit the HP Handhelds Forum and one of the first things you'll hear about is **100BUDDY**, a collection of utilities forum regulars consider a must-have. Distributed as a single ZIPped file, 100BUDDY "provides an amazing improvement in the usability of the HP palmtop," says David Shier, a software dealer in Westlake Village, California. One utility automatically capitalizes "I" and the first word of every sentence, all but eliminating the need to shift on the tiny keyboard. A slight refinement, but one that Shier estimates increased his typing speed by at least 50 percent. 100BUDDY also includes a scheduler, battery saver, and a world-time map with changing sun and moon graphics that Shier says is "just plain fun."

Forum member Steven Zweibel, an internal-medicine resident in New York City, bought a palmtop so he could write research proposals and letters on the subway, in a clinic, "or anywhere I have a few free minutes," he says. Printing and editing were another matter, however, so Zweibel searched for a utility that would transfer documents to his desktop machine. His solution, **ZIP.COM**, proved invaluable. "Without it I would need a much larger and slower program to transfer these files," he says.

What's Around the Corner

Predicting utilities to come is like trying to anticipate accessories for fashions yet designed. The utility market, by and large, reflects contemporary commercial software and the deficiencies therein. As software is designed to serve more and more tasks at the office and home, the next utilities will likely bolster yet unseen applications or new-and-improved versions of what we're using now.

Judging from a few recent threads in forums where utility programmers hang out, however, the world can't necessarily take free or inexpensive utilities for granted. Andrew Motes, for example, recently posted a long message to anyone interested in the Association of Shareware Professionals Forum, announcing his intentions to never again update School Mom, a shareware home-education program. "I'd like to announce my retirement from shareware," he said in the message, which went on to blast the honesty of downloaders and lament the glut of shareware online. "Shareware has not been good to me and I'm sure I can find a more productive way of spending my

TattleTech
TATAPP.CPT
Macintosh Systems Forum
(GO MACSYS)
Library 7, "Utilities"

Trash Free-K!
TRHFK.ZIP
Windows Shareware Forum
(GO WINSHARE)
Library 2,
"File Apps/Utils"

VGA Snowstorm
SNOW92.ZIP
IBM New Users Forum
(GO IBMNEW)
Library 5, "Fun Graphics"

Wild & Crazy Wallpapers
WALL1A.ZIP
Desktop Publishing Forum
(GO DTPFORUM)
Library 4,
"Other Art/Graphics"

commands, and **Smooth Move**, which handily appends a menu of frequently used folders to the Finder's Special menu.

The current MacUser ZMac Utility of the Month can be downloaded from Library 2, "MacUser Utilities," of ZiffNet's Free Utilities Forum. To browse among past utilities, visit Library 3, "MacUser Utilities," of the MacUser Forum (GO MACUSER).

ZiffNet Exclusive Utilities

ZiffNet's Exclusive Utilities differ from those of *PC Magazine* in that they tend to be less technically oriented or specifically focused, says Robert Gerami, product manager for the Public Brand Software–associated utilities. Indeed, browsing the Windows-oriented selection indicates a bent toward a general audience's tastes, which includes among many others:

The popular screen savers **Gates Does Windows**, in which a cartoon version of the Microsoft Corp. chairman "cleans" the user's screen with a squeegee, and **Construction**, an animation that destroys the screen with a wrecking ball or buzz saw;

SaveAs, which provides point-and-click directory-creation capabilities by adding a New Directory action button to Windows' common Save As dialog boxes;

Frequent Files, which ends tedious searches through long directories by capturing each file you open in a Windows application and letting you create a "Permanent Box" from which you can retrieve your most-often-used files.

Gerami often employs the ideas and programming skills of some big-name PC software developers, including Eric Walsh, Michael Medford, Dan Bombach, and Barry Smiler, creator of the **SmilerShell** Windows command-line shell. But he looks within as well. One of the first ideas for an exclusive utility came from a fellow Ziff staffer. "One of the higher-ups sent me an article that had a wish list of features for a video manager for Windows," says Gerami. The perfect utility would let users switch easily between video modes from a list of "favorite" drivers. Two weeks later Gerami had turned one around, and added a bonus emergency restore feature. The result? A popular download: **Smart Video Manager**.

The ZiffNet Custom Utilities can be found in two locations: Library 8, "Ziff Custom Utils," of the Public Brand Software Utilities Forum (GO PBSUTIL), and featured on ZiffNet's Special File Collections (GO ZNT:ZCOLLECTION) menu, Option 3, ZiffNet Exclusive Utilities.

—CJG

PBS Utilities Forum Holds Utility Contest

To encourage more suggestions on possible Ziff utilities from its members as well as from non-ZiffNet CompuServers, the Public Brand Software Utilities Forum (GO PBSUTIL) is sponsoring a contest through January 15 in a new forum section, "ZDI Exclusives."

Post your idea for a nifty DOS or Windows utility in a message there, or send a CompuServe Mail message to Robert Gerami, product manager for Public Brand Software, at 72241,2065. The winning entrant will have his or her idea developed as a Ziff Exclusive Utility (credited in the program's About box and documentation) and receive a double-speed CD-ROM drive.

WinDirex
WINDRX.ZIP
Windows Shareware Forum
(GO WINSHARE)
Library 2,
"File Apps/Utils"

Windowshade
WSHADE.SEA
Desktop Publishing Forum
(GO DTPFORUM)
Library 5,
"Mac DTP Utilities"

WinMap
WMAP#.EXE
Windows Shareware Forum
(GO WINSHARE)
Library 4,
"Win System Utils"

WINMENU
WMENUN.ZIP
Novell User Library Forum
(GO NOVUSER)
Library 11,
"Windows Utilities"

WinPointer
WPNTR.ZIP
ZiffNet PC Magazine's Tips/Utilities Forum
(GO TIPS)
Library 2,
"PC Mag Utilities"

WunderBar
WUNDER.SIT
ZiffNet/Mac MacUser Forum
(GO MACUSER)
Library 3,
"MacUser Utilities"

WWPlus
WWPLS.EXE
Windows Fun Forum
(GO WINFUN)
Library 10,
"Graphic Utils"

ZIP.COM
ZIP.ZIP
HP Handhelds Forum
(GO HPHAND)
Library 5,
"95LX Datacomm"

time—like working at McDonald's." Despite dozens of thoughtful pleas from fellow forum members encouraging him to keep the faith, Motes's resolve hasn't budged.

Fortunately, the majority of shareware uploaders balance out Motes's skepticism. "When I hear someone complain about registrations, it bothers me," says Fred Hertenstein, executive director of the upstart Association of Shareware Authors and Distributors. According to Hertenstein, competition drives the utility world just as any other, and low registration doesn't necessarily reflect an ungrateful public. "Some authors put too high a price on their work and virtually price themselves out of the market," he says. "Why would a user pay more for a program if another will perform almost, if not all of, the same service?" Hertenstein adds that programmers need to keep their products fresh by updating their utilities at least once a year. "Upgrading their program keeps it in the new-files areas, where it will be downloaded more frequently."

In the last year or two, says Jerry Olsen, a shareware analyst and contributor to *PC Magazine*, a polarization has occurred within the industry. "The top shareware products are doing very well indeed," he says, "while lesser products are doing poorer." As retail software prices continue to drop, Olsen says, mediocre shareware that once thrived no longer has much hope. "With price points much closer together, shareware must be good as well as less expensive to survive."

Discussions on ethics and other shareware issues take place in a variety of forum sections, where utility writers meet to share ideas and interact with their public. The Association of Shareware Professionals Forum (GO ASPFORUM) and UKSHARE Forum's (GO UKSHARE) section devoted to the Shareware Trade and Resources Association (STAR) are good places to lurk, as is shareware analyst Jerry Olsen's own section in UKSHARE, "JWOlsen."

An evolutionary milestone certain to affect utility development is the next generation of Windows. "The marketplace is going to have a big change when Windows 95 comes out," says programmer Pat Chefalo. "I'm wondering whether there will be mass acceptance, or an ongoing need for Windows 3.x utilities. That leaves part-time shareware developers in the lurch, because of the need to satisfy both operating systems, maintaining and distributing different versions."

If nothing else, says one expert, a new operating system will simply present yet another challenge to authors. "If an operating system or a program doesn't provide everything it could or do something in the best way, someone will write a program to provide what is missing," says Michael Callahan, a product line manager for Gold Medallion Software and author of *Dr. File Finder's Guide to Shareware* (Osborne/McGraw-Hill, 1990). "I've watched that happen since the beginning. That's one reason I've always said that, virtually without exception, for *anything* you want to do, you can find a shareware or freeware program that does it."

That doesn't mean, of course, that freelancers are likely to take over application production. "Utility production has never been, and will never be, a substitute for the commercial market," says consultant Bob Eyer. "But individual users may achieve a better mix of computer capabilities by looking at all available sources, like CompuServe."

Registering Shareware Utilities

Some utilities are freeware, but many are shareware, which lets users try out the software before paying a fee if they intend to keep it. In these cases, the authors think the functionality of the program or the time spent writing it is worth a few dollars, and within the utility's help boxes or documentation they solicit users to register the software by dropping a check in the postal mail.

While addressing an envelope and licking a stamp isn't a lot to ask, many utility authors make registering their software even easier by including their title in the database of CompuServe's Shareware Registration service (GO SWREG). The easy-to-use database permits you to charge shareware fees to your CompuServe account, which are later passed along to the authors.

When downloading a utility, note if the file description mentions SWREG and gives a database identification number. When you're ready to register, visit the registration area using Information Manager software, select Register Shareware from the menu, and input the ID number into the Registration ID search field. If you don't have the number, check the utility's documentation or online help command; authors often list all pertinent information about themselves, including the SWREG ID, there. Lacking the ID completely, you can also search the database via other criteria: the utility's title, original file name, the author's CompuServe User ID number or name, or keywords describing the utility, which narrow database selections in the same manner as the online File Finder.

When you've found the utility, simply select Register and enter the information for which you're prompted (full name, address, telephone number, number of copies being registered, and disk size). A confirmation window then appears, and by selecting Register again in this window you finalize the registration.

—CJG

Hits Parade: Popular Utilities by Platform

CompuServe's hardware-specific forums, such as IBMNET and MAUG, are a rich resource of helpful time-saving or problem-solving utilities. Some forums have entire libraries dedicated to utilities (or are further broken down into specific kinds of utilities), while others have the programs scattered throughout all libraries based on computing function (printing, disk-related, file-related, etc.). The following are some of the most popular downloadable utilities (based roughly on total recent retrievals) found in forums that represent the richest utility resource online for a particular PC, network, or operating system.

Amiga User Forum (GO AMIGAUSER)

ECSDiagnosis
Helps determine what may be wrong with an Amiga that's not acting as it should. Library 8, "Other Utilities," DIAG.LHA (6,787 bytes).

DiskSalv
The fourth release of this "disk salvaging" program that recovers data from a disk in severe trouble and fixes a good portion of disk problems, using a full GUI interface. Library 9, "Disk Utilities," DSALV.LHA (112,021 bytes).

Garshneblanker
A complete modular screen-blanking package that features screen-mode database use in each module, font-sensitive window, and AppWindow and AGA support. Library 10, "Screen Utilities," GB020.LHA (204,005 bytes).

PrintManager
This print-spooler commodity works with every program, text file, or graphics file and recovers unfinished print jobs after a system crash. Library 11, "Printer Utilities," PRTMAN.LHA (23,936 bytes).

IBM OS/2 Users Forum (GO OS2USER)

System Resources
A small application that monitors system memory, available file-swapping space, free disk space, and current system load, and displays any combination of these in a minimally sized window. Library 4, "Application Quest.," MEMSIZ.ZIP (241,634 bytes).

Zip Control
An easy-to-use PM program that provides a point-and-click interface to the OS/2 freeware versions of PKZip and PKUnZip. Library 4, ZIPCTL.ZIP (358,586 bytes).

Workplace Backup
Back up your OS/2 2.x desktop configuration while you're running. Restore is quick and easy when recovery is required. Library 4, WPSBKP.ZIP (100,749 bytes).

Telephone Dialer
A multi-threaded 32-bit PM application that keeps a database of names and telephone numbers, with modem dialing and list printout. Library 4, PHONE.ZIP (62,945 bytes).

IconEase
A 32-bit presentation manager, this utility takes the hassle out of maintaining an icon library and modifying icons in the Workplace Shell. Library 4, ICONES.ZIP (58,748 bytes).

Visual Undelete
Shows you all files available for restoration via the Undelete command, and undeletes selected files. Library 15, "Open Forum," VUNDEL.ZIP (55,754 bytes).

BOOTOS2
Allows you to build a BOOTable OS/2 V2 system using an existing system onto floppy disks or a hard-drive partition. Library 23, "IBM Files," BOOT2X.ZIP (61,764 bytes).

IBM Systems/Utilities Forum (GO IBMSYS)

PowerBatch
Creates stand-alone EXE batch files that work at speeds usually achievable only with compiled programs. Eighty additional batch-file commands are included, letting you control screen colors, draw boxes, get keyboard input, access system information, and more. Library 1, "DOS Utilities," PWRBAT.EXE (279,354 bytes).

4Files
A file manager and system enhancer offering effortless drive and directory navigation. Use single keystrokes to manage files, launch programs, and load data files into applications. Library 1, 4FILES.ZIP (108,097 bytes).

CEnvi
Making the C programming language as easy to use as a batch file, CEnvi implements the Cmm scripting language for the enhancement of batch files or quick creation of utilities. Fifty sample utilities are included. Library 3, "General Utils," CENVID.ZIP (232,064 bytes).

VirexPC
A PC virus-detection and -removal utility, catching old and newer system invaders such as Junkie, CHILLTouch, StealthBoot, and the SMEG-encrypted Pathogen and Queeg. Has improved network support and tiny TSR for low-memory environments. Library 3, VIRX.ZIP (200,965 bytes).

Uninstall for Windows
This popular utility helps get rid of unwanted Windows applications and their hidden support files, such as DLL directory files and modifications to the WIN.INI file. Library 4, "Multitasking," UN4WIN.ZIP (54,121 bytes).

DOSmenu/NETmenu
A well-reviewed network menu system that's small, easy, powerful, and secure. Runs TSRs, user logging, and software metering, and is changeable on the fly. Library 5, "DOSShells/Mgrs," DOSMNU.EXE (387,553 bytes).

PKZip and PKUnZip
PKWare's file-compression utilities create and unzip all ZIP files. Library 6, "File Utilities," PK204G.EXE (202,574 bytes).

Graffix
Does screen captures for DOS and Windows, supporting 16-, 256-, and 24-bit TrueColor modes. Saves the entire screen, currently active window, or a cropped rectangular area to a GIF, BMP, or PCX file. Library 6, GRAFFX.ZIP (29,953 bytes).

Disk Imager
A small utility that makes an image of your 360K, 720K, 1.2MB, or 1.44MB diskette and places it on your hard drive for later restoring. Good for making multiple disk copies or sending a disk by modem. Library 6, DF.ZIP (88,367 bytes).

Sleek
This text-file formatter removes all hard returns within paragraphs, compresses and expands line lengths, and removes leading spaces for files with a margin, among other functions. Library 6, SLEEK.ZIP (15,641 bytes).

NoteWare
A top-rated TSR notepad you pop up anytime to write notes, capture screens, dial the phone, view files or directories, or find information in notes. Library 7, "Desktop Utils," NOTEWR.ZIP (111,930 bytes).

Macintosh Systems Forum (GO MACSYS)

Greg's Browser
A shareware award winner that makes moving, copying, deleting, and renaming files easier, and lets you browse StuffIt and Compact Pro archives as if they were folders. Library 7, "Utilities," GRGBRW.SIT (88,576 bytes).

TattleTech/TattleTale
Reports more than 550 pieces of information about your hardware and System, and checks file integrity. Locates specific files and resources. Library 7, TATAPP.CPT (311,552 bytes).

AutoClock
Your Mac's clock can be synchronized with one of seven time servers, at your request or periodically based on a schedule. Continually adjusts clock based on calculated mean time, and displays current time in almost any country. Library 7, ACLOCK.CPT (115,968 bytes).

Speedometer
The standard Mac benchmark program computes the speed of your CPU and video with a variety of tests, then lets you compare the results with correct settings of your and other Mac models. Library 7, SPEEDO.SEA (278,656 bytes).

Disinfectant
The premier freeware antiviral utility from John Norstad at Northwestern University. Library 7, DISINF.SEA (176,000 bytes).

Easy Errors
Lets you quickly discover what a particular Mac error code means: type the number in, and up pops the problem. Library 7, EZERR.SIT (31,616 bytes).

CatFinder
A disk-management tool that catalogs the contents of all your disks (hard, diskettes, CD-ROM) and provides a Finder-like interface for browsing. Also scans StuffIt archives and generates reports. Library 7, CATFND.SIT (84,992 bytes).

Speecher
Enter text or read text from a file, and this program lets any Speech Manager–equipped Mac speak it. Highlights and displays the currently spoken word. Library 7, SPEECH.CPT (25,088 bytes).

ShrinkWrap
A disk-image mounting utility in the form of an application, not an extension. Library 7, SHRINK.SIT (48,768 bytes).

File Buddy
This general file utility has a powerful Find function and helps free your hard disk of unused files. Library 7, FILEBU.SIT (164,864 bytes).

Check 32!
If you have more than 8MB of RAM, chances are you're using 32-bit addressing, and this utility checks applications for 32-bit "cleanliness." Library 7, CHECK.SIT (46,720 bytes).

IconClock
A simple, uncluttered program that displays an analog clock in the menu bar and plays a sound on the quarter, half, or full hour. Shows current CPU speed on PowerBooks. Library 7, ICLOCK.SIT (33,280 bytes).

Novell User Library Forum (GO NOVUSER)

QView Pro
Allows complete control of multiple print queues on a Novell network, featuring queue viewing, drag-and-drop moving of print jobs from one queue to another, delete of duplicate and oversize jobs, and more. Library 6, "Printer Utilities," QVIEWP.ZIP (338,027 bytes).

FSTATS
A Netware 3.11 NLM that monitors and collects various file-server statistics for importation into any spreadsheet for graphing purposes. Library 7, "Network (Sys) Utils," FSTATS.ZIP (5,170 bytes).

NetOFF
This NLM logs users off at predetermined times, properly closing their files first, to ensure complete backups. Has warnings, exemptions, inclusions, and log-file options. Library 8, "Client WS Utils," MOFF.ZIP (7,421 bytes).

WinMenu
A corporate-wide Windows menu program for Netware users, including an administration facility, authorized access based on group codes, startup company-news display, and more. Loaded with functionality. Free trial period. Library 11, "Windows Utilities," WMENUN.ZIP (196,718 bytes).

ScheduLAN
Everything you could want in a Netware-based office scheduler, with intuitive interface, pop-up alarms, many reports, and scheduling for up to 200 people. Event linking updates other appointments when you change one. Library 14, "General Utilities," SKDLAN.ZIP (382,383 bytes).

UNIX Forum (GO UNIXFORUM)

Unroller
A Bourne Shell script that assists in the expansion of compressed files that use such UNIX extensions as TAZ, TGZ, SHZ, and FAZ. Also strips files of Control-M and Z "DOSisms" in plain-text files like FAQs. Library 3, "Tools," UNROLL.SH (14,148 bytes).

Password Maker
C source code that, compiled, is a program creating random pronounceable passwords for your system's means of security. Library 3, PWGEN.ZIP (4,413 bytes).

THE
A full-screen character-mode text editor based on the VM/CMS editor XEDIT. Runs on many types of UNIX systems. Library 4, "Communications," THE13.TGZ (417,298 bytes).

Windows User Group Network Forum (GO WUGNET)

Drag and File
A powerful Windows File Manager that performs most standard file actions, but on multiple DF windows in one action. Lists files for entire drive or multiple drives, and has ZIPping and UNZIPping shell. Library 4, "Config Secrets," DRAGFL.ZIP (1,057,005 bytes).

WinZip
An extremely popular and award-winning utility putting a Windows face on ZIP and UNZIP actions (PKWare's programs aren't needed for basic operations). Also supports ARJ, LHA, and ARC archives and most virus scanners. Library 4, WZIP55.EXE (275,324 bytes).

Hogs
Are those Program Manager replacements and hidden programs still running "hogging" your memory? This utility tells you by listing active programs in order of most memory used to the least. Updates every second, and Compact Memory button frees up as much memory as possible. Library 4, HOGS13.ZIP (79,017 bytes).

WorldTime
Shows current times and dates in cities around the world (more than 170 are included in the database), keeping in mind local daylight-savings policies. Library 4, WTM21A.ZIP (81,256 bytes).

Plug-In
This utility dramatically improves Windows' Program Manager without replacing it. Features include complete group management, detailed system info, resource displays and alarms, custom cursors, and more. Library 4, PLUGIN.ZIP (128,916 bytes).

Prompt Toolbar
This adds a toolbar to MS-DOS prompts, facilitating cut and paste, and has a scroll-back function. Optional German-language mode for international users. Library 4, DOSBAR.ZIP (14,276 bytes).

Mouse Warp
Toggle Booleans came up with this nifty cursor enhancement, which among other things permits blinking cursors, total keyboard mouse movement, function assignment to unused mouse buttons, and a screen-edge "Wrap" feature. Library 4, MW21.ZIP (87,507 bytes).

Better Colors
Change the shades of the fixed Windows-system colors with this palette, which brightens the dull colors, changing red to rose, black to navy, or white to manila. Works with all apps and 16- or 256-color screen drivers. Library 4, BCOLOR.ZIP (29,312 bytes).

RipBAR
This resizable toolbar can store applications and documents, ready for launching with the click of a mouse. Includes clock, memory and resource gauges, Post-It–style notes, and more. Supports groups via a unique tab interface and dozens of customization options. Library 4, RIPBAR.ZIP (241,123 bytes).

INI Manager
MAINTINI is a small DOS-based program which lets you modify INI files from the DOS command line. Useful for networks. Create a new section, and add or modify keys and values. Library 4, MAINTI.ZIP (30,534 bytes).

VIDVUE
A complete multimedia viewer-slideshow-image utility for Windows, handling all of the popular sound, image, and animation formats. Converts formats and colors, and offers a host of image-tweaking options. Library 9, "Multimedia," VIDVUE.ZIP (552,062 bytes).

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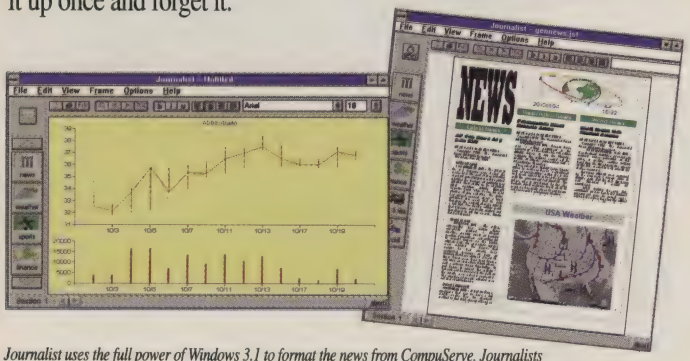

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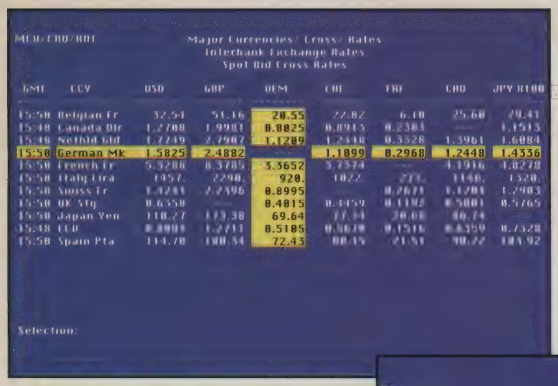

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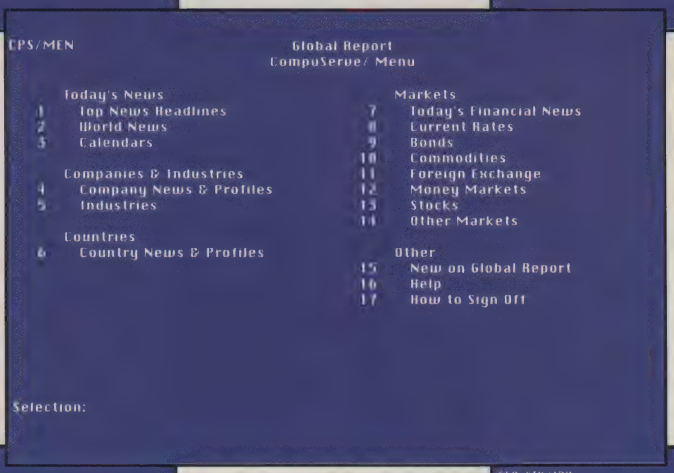

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by Paul A. Gilster

Newsgroups Explained

CompuServe's newest on-ramp to the Internet gives you access to thousands of forum-like areas.

Are Usenet newsgroups: (a) a worldwide electronic coffee klatch; (b) a constantly expanding set of focused discussions; or (c) a system of distributed anarchy where the loudest voices are the most likely to be heard? If your answer is all three, you've probably already sampled this extraordinary network phenomenon. As CompuServe members are now discovering, Usenet is too big to pigeonhole.

Newsgroups, another step in CompuServe's expanding linkage to the Internet made available last October, are similar in many ways to CompuServe forums—with a few twists. Like a forum, a newsgroup is a discussion area about a particular topic, allowing individuals with common interests to post and reply to messages. Unlike forums, however, newsgroups contain no message sections or separate file libraries, and many are unmoderated (meaning they're not reviewed or systematized by a sysop). Some 8,500 newsgroups currently circulate through Usenet, their messages being passed from site to site with no central organization.

"I love the variety!" says Neil Bloomgarden, a systems analyst in New York City. "Where else could you find topics this wide-ranging?" In fact, Usenet newsgroups range from serious science (sci.anthropology) to pop culture (rec.arts.comics). You can talk politics in misc.activism.progressive, discuss dining in rec.food.restaurants, or investigate holistic medicine in misc.health.alternative. Every brand or type of computer has a newsgroup devoted to it, as do all major software titles. If a hobby, fandom, or subject of hatred (usually recognized by the "die.die.die" in the title) is conceivable, it probably has its own newsgroup(s) as well.

Created in 1979 with sites at the University of North Carolina and nearby Duke University, Usenet grew out of the need to share information. Its software allowed UNIX-based computers to store and forward messages from one computer to another, demonstrating a practical way to distribute postings among machines worldwide. Because its traffic passed through computers at universities and laboratories, Usenet's early audience was largely academic or research-oriented. But today its newsgroups are propagated through computers of all kinds. Usenet is not the Internet, but much of its traffic flows across the Internet.

Newsgroups operate solely through the efforts of their contributors and the system administrators at more than 100,000 sites that route their traffic. To some, Usenet's propensity for wide-open, no-holds-barred discussion is distracting, even offensive. To others, it represents the logical extension of the First Amendment. "It's what the Bill of Rights would have been if only Ben Franklin had gotten the Continental Congress networked in time," says Kevin Martin, an assistant vice president at Citibank in New York and a regular on CompuServe's Internet New Users Forum and the newsgroup alt.usenet.offline-reader.

"Usenet is not owned by anyone," Martin adds. "There's no one you can take to court—or punch in the nose—if something pops up that offends you. It's amazing that it had enough cohesion to come into existence, but since it did, this lack of central authority gives it amazing resilience."

But if unowned, Usenet newsgroups are not unorganized. Instead, they rely on a precise hierarchical structure. The newsgroup rec.arts.movies, for example, is part of the broad "rec" category for recreational subjects. It is made more specific by

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Paul A. Gilster is the author of The Internet Navigator *(John Wiley & Sons, 1993) and* Finding It on the Internet *(Wiley, 1994). His CompuServe User ID number is 75300,2523.*

The Tenets of Usenet "Netiquette"

Newcomers to Usenet should remember that they are about to encounter a different network culture, one with its own rules of behavior. Here's a list of the etiquette issues involved. Being a good Net citizen means mastering these principles before you post a message on Usenet.

Read before you post. This allows you to learn what issues have been discussed and the tone unique to that newsgroup. Newcomers should also read the news.announce.newusers group for background information.

Find the right newsgroup. With more than 8,500 newsgroups available, it makes no sense to post a question about your modem problems to a newsgroup called soc.culture.new-zealand. Choose carefully before you consider posting.

Read the FAQs. Frequently-asked-questions lists are posted in individual newsgroups and in the news.answers newsgroup. Before you post, check to see whether your question has already been answered in one of these documents.

Postage-due issues. CompuServe members who intend to post on Usenet should make sure they can receive incoming Internet e-mail (it is common practice to respond to Usenet posts by mail). Receiving an Internet message costs 15 cents and is applied toward your monthly $9 mail allowance. (Note that messages greater than 7,500 characters in length are charged 5 cents for each additional 2,500 characters.) By default, your account is set to receive such postage-due messages. If you have changed the default, GO ASCIIMAIL and choose menu item 6, Set Options. Set Receive Postage-Due Messages to Yes. You will still be able to delete received messages without being charged.

Use mail to follow up. Often electronic mail, rather than posting a message, is the best way to respond to a question; otherwise, the newsgroup is flooded with similar answers.

Format your messages clearly. Use lines no more than 80 characters long. Seventy-two characters is even better; this makes it possible for others to quote your message within their response. Don't right-justify text (it's harder to read), and, as on CompuServe, never submit a message in all uppercase letters, which is interpreted as shouting. Use no special control characters and avoid tabs.

Don't post twice. A message to a newsgroup may take time to appear. Don't assume that your message has vanished and re-post it just because it doesn't show up immediately.

Flag your jokes. Humor always has a place on Usenet, but even the cleverest riposte can get you into trouble when someone misunderstands it. Emoticons such as the ubiquitous :-) (look at it sideways) help take the edge off comments that might otherwise be ambiguous. Avoid sarcasm.

Don't advertise. Advertising is off-limits. Telling readers of a newsgroup about a product they might be interested in is permissible. Scattershot mailings and promotion of your own business are not. Product announcements may be made only within the comp.newprod newsgroup and the "biz" newsgroups, where submission guidelines can be found.

No "spamming." Flooding numerous newsgroups with copies of the same message to get wide distribution is known as spamming and is not appreciated on Usenet. Cross-post only to appropriate groups, usually no more than two (the CIM interface limits cross-posting to five newsgroups).

Avoid headline news. Usenet is not a radio station. By the time you post a message about the latest development in Washington, the news will be old hat to your readers.

Limit your test messages. Send test messages only to newsgroups in the "compuserve" hierarchy, such as compuserve.test, or to the misc.test newsgroup.

Use clear and descriptive titles. A clear title allows people to choose threads they want to read by subject, rather than wading through irrelevant material message by message.

Be precise when quoting. If you reply to a message, summarize what you are responding to. If you quote the message for clarity, be sure to include only the relevant part of the text. Re-posting an entire message when you are responding to only one line takes up bandwidth for everyone.

Don't overdo signatures. A signature normally contains your name and address, and perhaps a favorite quotation. Avoid displays of ASCII art, maps, or other drawings, which simply take up storage space. The CIM interface limits signatures to five lines.

Avoid superfluous posts. Messages need to have content. Don't post "Me, too" messages in response to a query.

—PAG

the "arts" tag in the middle, and declares its subject at the end: "movies." A more specialized newsgroup branching off from the rec.arts.movies category would be rec.arts.movies.reviews. And while such a group may enjoy relaxed conversation, a group like sci.engr.biomed is highly professional, focusing on technical discussions of biomedical-engineering issues.

Usenet relies on its hierarchies to achieve the same effect as CompuServe's forum sections. In addition to the above, the major hierarchies include "comp," for computer-related issues; "talk," for freewheeling discussion of controversial subjects; "news," for Internet news and announcements; "soc," for social and cultural debates; "uk" and "de," for topics specific to Great Britain and Germany; and "misc," for subjects that don't fit easily into any of the other categories. Another popular hierarchy is "alt," Usenet's equivalent to any CompuServe forum's "Village Inn" section, where discussions tend to be looser and frequently livelier than anywhere else on the Net.

And be advised: because most newsgroups are unmoderated, anarchy can sometimes prevail, making the atmosphere closer to a barroom brawl than a rational discussion (try talk.politics.guns for some lively action). In others, reasoned analysis holds court, as specialists post news and updates about their work; sci.med.occupational, for example, pertains particularly to the detection and treatment of occupational injuries. It's a lively, ever changing place—new newsgroups are created weekly, often in response to a timely topic—so Usenet feels like home to actor David Laundra, who spends time in alt.ascii-art and the more than two dozen newsgroups devoted to the Amiga computer. "Living in New York City, you come to realize the tremendous advantage of being in a large community," he says. "No matter how esoteric or arcane your interests, you can find a bookstore or a bar full of like-minded souls. The Usenet/Internet community is larger than any city. New York may have the edge when it comes to diversity, but not by much."

COMPUTING SERVICES

A Different World

That diversity brings with it responsibilities. Usenet neophytes need to remember that when they enter the newsgroups they are traversing an entirely different network, says Sean Stoner, a network administrator and computer consultant living in Houston, Texas. Stoner hangs out in 13 different newsgroups related to his work and interests. "CompuServe members must understand what the Net is composed of: thousands of computers," he says. "A message posted to a newsgroup might travel halfway around the world through several hundred or even thousand computers before being seen by others. Knowing this might show CompuServers how finite and precious the resources are. With that understanding, they might be more reluctant to squander them."

For many CompuServe users, this "bandwidth" issue should be the biggest concern. Because messages take up disk space on computers worldwide, users must avoid unnecessary posting that causes congestion in the system. What you say and how you say it become critical issues, considering the lack of a moderator means that most newsgroups are entirely self-regulating. Make a flagrant error and you'll hear about it from Usenet denizens, who may respond with anything

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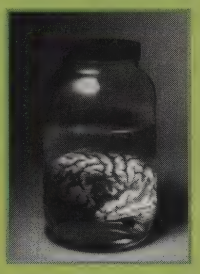

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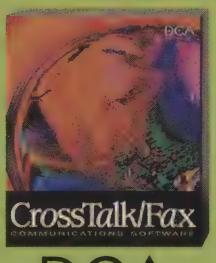

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from a gentle nudge to a "flame," the online idiom for an angry confrontation, justified or otherwise.

Quoting from a message you are responding to is an example. Because the quantity of messages in some newsgroups is so great, it is standard practice on Usenet to embed excerpts from a message in your own posting, to create a context for your reply. But the temptation to quote long passages must be tempered by the need to be concise. Never post a message that is more quote than reply. CompuServe's Information Manager interface helps on both these points: replies to posted messages default to a CompuServe Mail response (uncheck the box to actually post to the newsgroup), and the mailing system used checks how much of your message is quoted versus how much is your own reply. If a message is 50 percent quoted material or more, you'll receive a warning that you've violated the netiquette rule within a Could Not Send dialog. If this happens, try selecting a smaller portion of quoted material.

COMPUTING SERVICES

Michael Bauser, a Kent State University graduate student in cultural anthropology, is studying how people communicate through noncommercial networks like Usenet. He monitors the sci.anthropology newsgroup, alt.config and news.admin.misc (places where "Usenet talks about Usenet"), and the "viciously funny insults" that make up a large part of alt.fan.warlord and alt.flame.roommate. The newsgroups work, in Bauser's view, because norms of behavior are maintained by group consensus. "You follow the rules of etiquette or people make you feel like an outcast," he says. "The catch is that different newsgroups have different working definitions of 'wasted bandwidth,' so it's 'live and learn' for every group you read."

The noncommercial nature of Usenet serves to enforce these rules of etiquette (or "netiquette," as it's called) by explicitly discouraging advertising of any kind. Based in Danvers, Massachusetts, professional photographer Barry Swindell participates regularly in the alt.wedding newsgroup because he specializes in wedding pictures. When someone asked for recommendations for photographers in the Boston area, Swindell answered by e-mail rather than posting to the newsgroup, thus avoiding a potential controversy about self-promotion on the Net.

"The best advice I can give to newcomers to Usenet is that they take some time and browse a bit before becoming actively involved," Swindell says. "Beginners should start in the newcomers' newsgroups and then venture to the topic of their choice. They should also browse there to get a feel for the atmosphere of that group." Key newcomer newsgroups include compuserve.test, where members can practice posting, retrieving, and forwarding of messages, and Usenet's news.announce.newusers, which answers questions of Net etiquette as well as basic matters of procedure.

Diversity and Cooperation

For those who master Usenet etiquette, the rewards can be substantial. Internet forums sysop Steve Wegert has experienced the breadth of knowledge to be found in the newsgroups. Wegert, who monitors the CompuServe newsgroups as well as several relating to SCO products he maintains at work, cites the problems he encountered when trying to add more hard drives to a computer system in his office. When he posted a message about his difficulties in the relevant newsgroup (comp.sys.m88k), a design engineer who specialized in the particular subsystem involved came up with a solution. A similar posting helped to solve a thorny software-installation problem at the site.

Wegert also urges newcomers to read everything they can find about Usenet before posting, noting that there's lots of useful free reading on Usenet's main menu, covering netiquette and frequently asked questions. The Internet forums also have very helpful sysops ready to answer your questions, he says, and its file libraries contain numerous help documents. (See "Informative Files," on p. 27.) Another key is patience, he says. "I think the biggest mistake folks make when accessing the newsgroups is assuming they are as friendly as the local BBS. They may or may not be. But one thing is consistent across all groups—they appreciate people who have done their homework before attempting to post."

Stoner advocates reading the frequently-asked-questions, or FAQ, lists before posting. These lists describe what a given newsgroup is about and lay out the basic issues under discussion there. A FAQ list is usually posted in each newsgroup as a message; FAQs for most newsgroups are also available in the news.answers newsgroup.

By now, Usenet may seem intimidating to all but the hardened network professional. But, in fact, the abundant diversity of the newsgroups allows you to target specific interests, and a few days spent reading the group's traffic can put you at ease. Following the basic netiquette rules (see "The Tenets of Usenet 'Netiquette,'" on p. 24) is very important, but before long these requirements become second nature. The key is to remember that non-CompuServe Usenet regulars are intent on making the network live up to its potential by reinforcing their ethic of cooperation. Mastering that principle, as each new user must, helps participants keep Usenet alive as a remarkable, self-sustaining, and worldwide dialogue.

See "CIMplified View," page 28.

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Informative Files From the Internet Forums

CompuServers interested in exploring Usenet's newsgroups can read up on the subject and find helpful programs in the Internet New Users Forum and the Internet Resources Forum. A sampling of what's available appears below. Remember that connect-free help documents are available on the Usenet main menu (GO USENET).

INTERNET NEW USERS FORUM (GO INETFORUM)

Library 2, "Getting Started"

Netiquette Essay—An admitted "clueless newbie" offers a personal point of view in this six-page essay on "how to get along with the Old Guard" of experienced Internet users. NETQET.TXT (14,242 bytes).

Library 7, "Usenet/Newsgroups"

Newsgroup Primer—A comprehensive and well-written guide by Apple's Chuq Von Rospach to making the best use of Usenet newsgroups, netiquette maxims, and related topics. PRIMER.TXT (22,221 bytes).

Usenet FAQ—The frequently-asked-questions file regarding newsgroups from the news.answers newsgroup. USENET.FAQ (42,280 bytes).

List of Newsgroups—A text-file list of all 3,400 newsgroups available through CIM's Browse for Newsgroups option, with one-line descriptions. NG-CIS.TXT (161,920 bytes).

Big List—A comprehensive list of available newsgroups from the International Internet Association. ZIPped text. NEWSGR.ZIP (136,063 bytes).

Neat Newsgroup Intro—A multimedia introduction to newsgroups for Windows users featuring many newsgroup addresses. USENET.ZIP (948,248 bytes).

Periodic Postings—A ZIPped-text list of all known Usenet newsgroups that operate with "periodic postings" such as FAQs that are retrievable by e-mail. PERIOD.ZIP (138,896 bytes).

Image Retrieval—Two beginner's guides to retrieving and viewing pictures available on some newsgroups (the second specifically from alt.binaries.pictures, a popular image newsgroup), a process requiring a few more steps than are involved with graphics viewing on CompuServe. USENET.TXT (3,811 bytes) and FAQ.TXT (122,397 bytes).

News Newsgroups—This file describes the major Usenet news-announcement newsgroups in the "news.announce" hierarchy. NEWSGR.TXT (7,942 bytes).

Where to Go—With thousands of newsgroups in existence, how do you know which is the right one to answer your question or for you to start a particular discussion? This file offers tips on finding the needle in the haystack. FNDNWS.TXT (16,826 bytes).

Batch UUDecoder—For DOS users tired of UUdecoding one file at a time, this program will decode all files with the UUE extension in a directory. Includes an advanced parsing system for correctly piecing together split files. UUD13.ZIP (48,966 bytes).

INTERNET RESOURCES FORUM (GO INETRESOURCES)

Library 5, "Software-Mac"

UULITE—A popular Mac utility for the UUencoding and UUdecoding of files. UULITE.SIT (100,992 bytes).

Navigator Scripts—CW's Nav Usenet Scripts are for use with CompuServe's Navigator for Macintosh. CWNAV.SIT (11,904 bytes).

Library 18, "Software-PC/Windows"

UUENCODE—The latest version of the utility that allows binary files to be sent by Internet mail and decoded on receipt. UUX525.ZIP (32,073 bytes).

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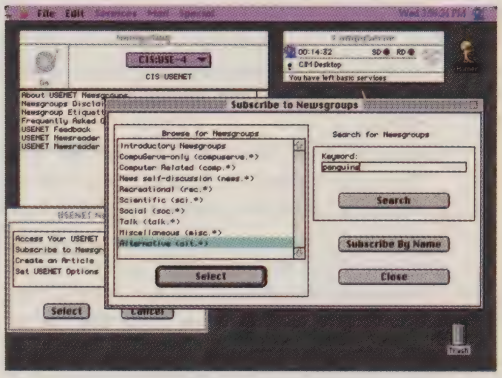
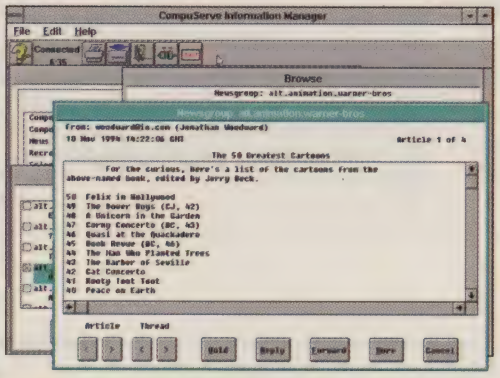
CIMplified View: Looking at Newsgroups

The beauty of CompuServe Information Manager is that it replaces typed commands with pull-down menus and an intuitive, graphical structure. And whether you're using the version for Windows, DOS, Mac, or OS/2, you'll find that your software provides an easy-to-use interface to Usenet. To reach the newsgroups, simply pull down the Services menu and select the Go option, typing USENET into the resulting dialog box. Be sure to read the "Newsgroup Etiquette" article (it's automatically displayed during your first trip to the menu) as well as the "Frequently Asked Questions" article, then choose Usenet Newsreader (CIM) to go straight into Usenet.

The Usenet Newsgroups box will appear, containing the basic newsgroup functions. When you first log on, two of the menu items, dealing with accessing your newsgroups and creating messages for them, will appear in gray, indicating they are not yet available for your use. After you have subscribed to one or more newsgroups, these items will become accessible. Here, with the necessary menu commands, are instructions on how to use the Usenet Newsgroups menu to subscribe to, read, and post Usenet news (newsgroup messages are referred to as "articles"). These instructions will also apply to many commands in the Usenet ASCII interface as well.



Whether you're using WinCIM, DOSCIM, or MacCIM, you'll find that your software provides an easy-to-use interface to Usenet.



Setting Usenet Options

Choose the Set Usenet Options menu item to create default settings for your newsgroups and to include information that will accompany your postings. The Options screen allows you to enter your name and an organization or business name that will appear on any message you post.

You can also set a number for postings in newly subscribed newsgroups. The default is 20, meaning that any time you subscribe to a newsgroup, you will receive the 20 most recent articles. You can change this default if you choose. Display options may also be controlled with this screen. By clicking on the box marked Display Newsgroups With No Articles, you can turn this option on or off (the default is on). With this option on, the next time you visit the Usenet area, CIM will display all of the newsgroups you've joined, even if no new articles have been posted. If this option is off, only newsgroups with new articles are shown to you.

A final option on this menu is to fill in a signature box. This box can include information you would like to have appear at the end of any postings you make to newsgroups or e-mail sent from the Usenet area. Usually, a name and address will suffice, although many Usenet users like to add a favorite quotation. Just remember to keep signatures short as a courtesy to others. Four or five lines is considered a reasonable length, and CIM software will limit you to that anyway.

Subscribing to Newsgroups

Now return to the Usenet Newsgroups menu and choose the Subscribe to Newsgroups option. The menu that appears allows you to choose the newsgroups you'd like to read. You have the ability to browse through the listings by choosing newsgroups from the main Usenet hierarchies, like "alt," "comp," "soc," and "rec." You can also browse through the new "compuserve" hierarchy or choose among the introductory newsgroups.

Subscribing to a newsgroup is easy: click on the box next to its name, select Subscribe, and you will see a dialog indicating that you have subscribed. An alternative method of subscribing to a group is to key in a particular newsgroup's name. To do this, click on the Subscribe by Name button, typing in the name of the newsgroup in question. If you want to subscribe to a newsgroup that isn't listed in the browsing menu, you can do so by following this method. Remember that the newsgroup you wish to subscribe to must be within one of the hierarchies that CompuServe has connections to, such as "alt," "soc," or "uk."

CompuServe Information Manager also lets you search for newsgroups by filling in the Keyword field. Enter the term of your choice and click on the Search button. You will be presented with a list of newsgroups that contain the search term, along with the option of subscribing to them, or of previewing their contents without subscribing.

Reading the News

Take the Access Your Usenet Newsgroups option from the main menu to read Usenet news. Highlight the newsgroup you want to read and click on Browse. This calls up the titles of the articles available in that newsgroup. To read a thread, simply highlight it in the Browse window and press Get. The resulting Newsgroup window offers you the ability to move back and forth through the thread's postings using the Article buttons, as well as back and forth through different threads using the Thread buttons. Should you stumble across an article you think someone you know online should see, select the Forward button, make sure the Send via E-Mail option is checked, type in any introductory comments you wish to add, and press Send. Another dialog will ask for the address of your recipient; these can be a CompuServe User ID number, Internet address (the prefix INTERNET: is not required), or those of any other mail system reachable by CompuServe Mail. Click OK and your message is sent onward.

If you'd like to save an article as text, select the More button and then select Retrieve, and give the file bound for your hard drive or diskette a name. Return to the Browse dialog at any time by simply pressing Cancel. Here you can use the Clear button to remove any threads you don't want to read from the list of available threads, and the Retrieve button to download entire threads to your computer. If you prefer to mark all of the articles in a newsgroup as already read, press Cancel again to return to the Access Newsgroups dialog, highlight the newsgroup in question, and press Clear.

CIM also provides a Search button on the Access Newsgroups menu that allows you to call up a dialog box. There, you can enter a keyword to search the current articles in a given newsgroup by topic. You can also use the Reread button to restore articles you have already cleared in a newsgroup. You will be given the option of entering the number of past articles you would like to see. And if you decide a newsgroup isn't for you, use the Remove button to take it off your subscription list.

Posting an Article

You can create an article from the Browse screen while looking at a newsgroup. Click on the Create button. This pops up a box with space for your message.

You will be able to choose among the newsgroups to which you are subscribed to pick the one to which you want to post, and you can cross-post in a maximum of five of those newsgroups, again adhering to the rules of netiquette. You can type in a subject along with the message and choose to send your posting via e-mail or as an article on the newsgroup itself or both. This screen also gives you the handy option of uploading a text file to include as part of your message (uploading your reply will let you circumvent the 25-line limit placed on replies composed within the Reply to Usenet Message dialog). If you are already reading a newsgroup and choose to send a follow-up to an existing article, you can use the Reply button to do so.

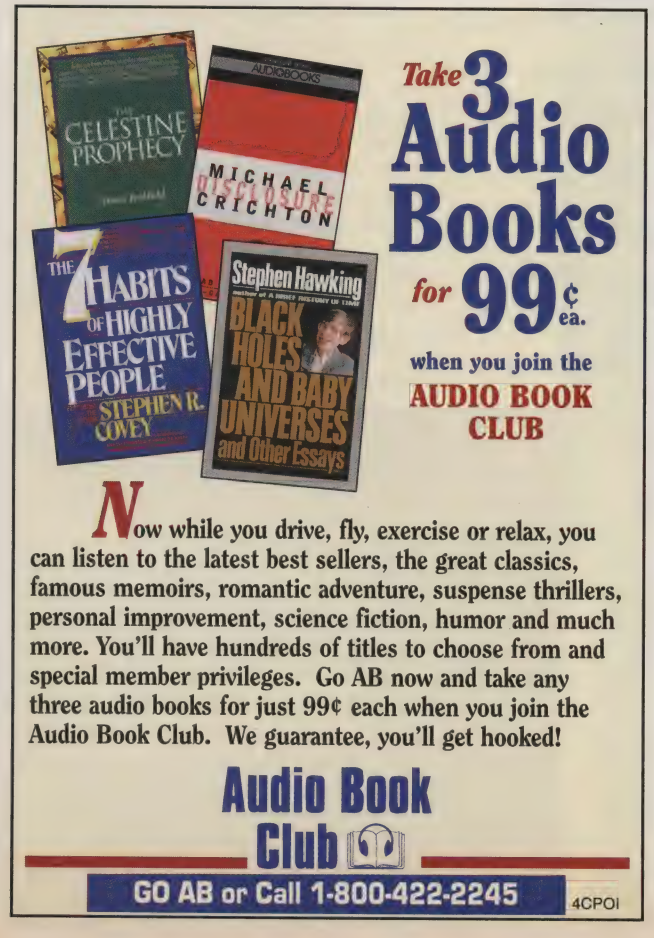
When posting a reply, remember that it's common on newsgroups to include or "quote" the relevant passages you're replying to on a point-by-point basis. For such longer replies, CIM encourages you to compose offline by letting you save the message you're replying to in a text file; it automatically adds the greater-than character (>) to the left margin of each line of the saved message, indicating quoted material.

To do this, while within the source posting's display dialog, select More and then Retrieve with the given option set to Quoted (you can also retrieve an entire thread in this manner within the Browse dialog). Make sure to save the now-read article online by pressing the Hold button within the dialog (thus ensuring that the article is rereadable when you return). Now disconnect from CompuServe, open the saved file using CIM's text editor (using Open off the File menu), as well as a new document (using New on the File menu), and cut and paste quoted portions you'd like to use into your reply. Save the new document, then reconnect. Return to the newsgroup and locate the source posting, then click Reply, and use the Upload button within the dialog to send your document into the workspace. You'll get an unmodifiable preview of the message; if it looks OK, press Send and the message is sent into the newsgroup as a reply.

Once you have subscribed to a newsgroup, you can also create articles by clicking on the Create an Article item from the top Usenet menu. You will receive the same text-entry box as above, with the ability to choose the newsgroup to which you want to post by clicking on it. If you post to a newsgroup, make sure you have your Receipt of Internet Mail option turned on (see "The Tenets of Usenet 'Netiquette,'" on p. 24) so responses to your posting can be placed in your e-mailbox. If you are using an ASCII interface, you must make any changes to your postage-due setting yourself.

The various versions of CompuServe Information Manager are being tweaked with an eye toward adding Usenet-specific features. Heading the list is a download queue, which will allow you to download your Usenet traffic to read offline. The ability to retrieve and decode encoded binary image files available on some newsgroups on the fly will be included in future CIM releases.

—PAG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by William Westbrook

The Blame Game

CHRIS PYLE

The self-employed are finding that in the "I'll-sue" '90s, insuring against mistakes is vital.

Consider this scary scenario. You're a computer consultant working out of your home, and two years ago you customized a billing program for an accounting firm. This morning the firm discovered that because of a small error of yours, it has been underbilling ever since. The partners now have a choice: they can tell all their clients that they're not very good at addition, or they can tell you to make up the loss.

Or try this one: You're an independent graphic designer, and a mistake you made on a brochure isn't discovered until after it's back from the printer. The client is looking at a $4,000 bill to get it reprinted—and he's looking to you to pay it.

Small businesses guard themselves from such risks in several ways. While many rely on incorporation and contracts alone to protect their livelihood from catastrophic mistakes, others are beginning to explore professional-liability insurance. In the litigious 1990s, they feel it's better to be safe than sorry.

Better known as errors-and-omissions, or e&o, insurance, it covers people against mistakes made during the course of their business duties: a computer consultant creating software, a graphic designer producing a brochure, even a freelance writer turning out a story. If a misplaced decimal, a wrongly specified color, or a mangled quote causes damages, e&o insurance is meant to cover the loss.

Though some professionals are very familiar with it—doctors don't make a move without their version, malpractice insurance—professional-liability insurance isn't as well known or widespread in other fields. "Insurance agents are not generally cognizant of this exposure, and therefore don't generate awareness in their clients," says Marc Di Giorgio, president of the Brandywine Insurance Agency in Madison, New Jersey. "Many companies that rely on computer professionals on an independent-contractor basis, for example, still use antiquated contracts," says Di Giorgio, a member of the Working From Home Forum. "There is no mention of professional-liability protection, because as a rule trade contractors never posed that kind of liability exposure for the company."

That appears to be changing. More and more CompuServers are learning about professional-liability insurance because clients are starting to require it. And that puts home-based businesspeople in a sticky situation: e&o insurance can be costly and difficult to obtain.

One member, who asked not to be named because of a deal in progress, is in the market for e&o only because his 35-page contract with a major software distributor demands it. "Although I've been self-employed for 10 years, this is the first time I've been required to purchase errors-and-omissions insurance," says the Michigan-based work-at-home professional. "It's the biggest deal of my career so far," he explains, "and the customer was not willing to back off the requirement of e&o. The bottom line is that I just consider it part of the deal—they're paying me well, so e&o's just another expense."

His willingness to pay the estimated $3,000-to-$5,000 annual premium, however,

William Westbrook, a writer and editor based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, frequently covers business topics.

PERSONAL ENTERPRISE

Where to GO

Computer Consultant's Forum
GO CONSULT

Entrepreneur's Small Business Forum
GO SMALLBIZ

Working From Home Forum
GO WORK

doesn't mean it's been easy finding an insurer to carry him. The four agencies he's approached responded with a surprisingly prohibitive battery of questions (What type of claims may be possible? Are clients required to sign off on a pilot test run prior to regular production? Is a test plan followed for all program modifications?) and requested disclosure of his most recently audited financial statement, promotional materials, and standard service and customer contracts.

"It appears I will become much better acquainted with my attorney and accountant over the next couple of years," he laments. "All I ever wanted was to make a living at a small, self-owned business. This deal better make me wealthy, because I'm not enjoying all the mumbo jumbo that is required to maintain it."

PERSONAL ENTERPRISE

Clint Ellis, a self-employed computer-management consultant in Kearney, Nebraska, has also had difficulty obtaining e&o. Although Ellis's work isn't technical per se—he doesn't design or implement systems himself, he just helps people manage them—he's had a tough time explaining the distinction to insurance companies. "So few people have specialized in this particular form of management consulting that the insurance companies don't feel comfortable with 'setting the odds,'" says Ellis, a member of the Computer Consultant's and Entrepreneur's Small Business forums. "They complain that there just isn't enough data to set an appropriate rate."

And though he's pledged to avoid some activities—such as designing systems or advising on procurement issues, neither of which he'd planned to do anyway—he reports that the insurance companies "still think I'm selling myself as some sort of contract-systems analyst or programmer." That is, they think he'll have more immediate and direct responsibility for the computer systems he's involved with and, thus, more liability if it goes bad. Still, he's managed to get some quotes on e&o; his problem now is finding enough. He's been offered just $200,000 of coverage for a $2,500 annual premium, and believes he needs significantly more.

Paul Thomas, who spent 10 years handling claims for Royal Insurance before beginning his own computer and network-repair business, isn't surprised that home-based computer consultants face such difficulty. "My understanding is that insurance companies are scared to death about the potential losses. If a programmer puts out a piece of software that sells well, and suddenly it's discovered he or she made an error that wipes out hard drives in certain limited—though not impossible—situations, the resultant claims would be like an earthquake." Insurance companies, he says, like a long history of cases by which to judge liability.

Some CompuServe members frustrated with the search for e&o turn to professional associations for help. For example, members of the Independent Computer Consultants Association can get up to $1 million in professional-liability insurance, with premiums based on the business's gross revenues. Other organizations, from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers to the U.S. National Systems Programmers Association and the Network Professionals Association, also offer professional-liability coverage.

Others, however, do their best to avoid the hassle altogether. Richard Greenwald, a member of the Working From Home Forum, counts on his corporate status to protect his assets, and further shields himself by addressing liability issues in his contracts. "My answer to worries about liability and the requirements of some clients for e&o insurance and the like is not to be bullied into it but rather to stipulate limitation-of-liability clauses in client-service agreements," he says. "Some clients would love us to assume unlimited liability. To those I say, 'I'll take my business elsewhere.'"

Insurance Files From Related Forums

Professional forums offer files on insurance for small businesses and the self-employed. The following is just a sample. To find more, search a forum's libraries using the keyword INSURANCE.

Computer Consultant's Forum (GO CONSULT)

Liability Exposure—Is errors-and-omissions insurance a good idea? Does incorporation help? This thread explores this issue and how computer consultants can protect themselves. Library 3, "Getting Started," LIAB1.THD (9,308 bytes).

More Liability Help—A client asks that a consultant carry a large amount of general-liability and errors-and-omissions insurance. How can the consultant respond? What degree of protection is offered by incorporation or insurance anyway? Library 3, LIAB2.THD (14,243 bytes).

Covering Computer Equipment—Solutions to covering computer equipment when you run a business from home. Library 3, EDPINS.THD (9,126 bytes).

NASE Discussion—Forum discussion about insurance sold by the U.S. National Association for the Self-Employed. Library 4, "Business Issues," HEALTH.THD (24,622 bytes).

Kinds of Insurance—What insurance does a computer consultant need? Life, health, dental, disability, homeowner's, liability, errors-and-omissions? How much should you expect to pay for this coverage? This thread discusses the needs for different kinds of insurance and where they can be obtained. Library 4, INSUR2.THD (7,753 bytes).

Entrepreneur's Small Business Forum (GO SMALLBIZ)

Insurance Software—Organize personal- or business-property data by location and type for insurance, warranty, tax, or other purposes. Lets you create separate files for home, office, etc. Also lets you prepare claims and monitor insurance premiums, expirations, and monthly costs. Library 10, "Software/Hardware," HOI.ZIP (659,669 bytes).

Dangers of Lack of Insurance—Tells how being uninsured can make your clients a liability to your business. Library 13, "Homebased Business," HI4315.TXT (6,251 bytes).

PR and Marketing Forum (GO PRSIG)

P.R. Advice—Forum discussions about the kinds of insurance a public-relations practitioner should have to support his or her business. Library 1, "On Your Own," INSUR.STR (5,172 bytes) and INSUR2.STR (5,936 bytes).

Working From Home Forum (GO WORK)

Home-Office Insurance—Message thread from Paul and Sarah Edwards's research for an article on home-office insurance, with members offering good and bad tales about finding and filing claims on their policies. Library 2, "Running a Business," INSURE.HO (27,612 bytes).

Errors and Omissions—Forum discussion on the availability of errors-and-omissions insurance for a graphic designer or typesetter. Library 2, EOINS.THD (6,798 bytes).

Writer's Liability—Forum talk about how writers can acquire liability insurance. Library 10, "Independent Writers," LIABLT.THD (6,745 bytes).

Liability/Errors and Omissions—Forum discussion about insurance against lawsuits, including liability and errors-and-omissions insurance. Library 12, "Legal Matters," INSURE.TXT (4,439 bytes).

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Ford

by Cathryn Conroy

Being Bigger Than You Are

DAVID RICCERI

Acting large saves home business from "size discrimination."

Jackie Goldstein knew his one-man, home-based computer consultancy was taking off when a large company approached him to write a major software program. Based in Raanana, Israel, the transplanted New Yorker impressed the corporate brass and began negotiating the details of the contract. Just before the last "t" was crossed, however, Goldstein's client got cold feet—it questioned his solo status and grilled him on whether he could complete the job without a "real" office or employees. In a decision the nervous company admitted had nothing to do with technical capability, Goldstein lost the bid to another firm with leased office space and additional workers. Since then, Goldstein says, "I've become more sensitive to the issue of size discrimination."

He isn't the only home-based businessperson who has lost work because of the perception that big is always best. Although small companies are known for creativity and freedom from bureaucratic game playing, home-based enterprises are all too often regarded as unprepared for the long haul. "There's not a lot you can do about size discrimination," admits Rudy Lewis, president of the Baltimore, Maryland–based U.S. National Association of Home-Based Businesses. But there *are* ways to position a mini-company to attract enough business to counteract it. "I think the key is not so much to look big as it is to *act* big," says Goldstein. "When you act big, you are perceived to be big, regardless of actual size."

The following are strategies from CompuServe members whose modest-size companies are thriving in a business culture where perception is often a challenging reality.

Think Big—Even If You're Not

A confident attitude and positive self-image are essential for home-based business success, insists John Borns, principal of Borns Management Services in Sylvania, Ohio. After years of working at home, he has learned to set performance standards high above his more traditional competitors. In addition, he never apologizes for the location of his business, noting, "A well-run home-based business can be more effective, more economical, and more competitive than its larger competition."

Dan Veaner, president of EmmaSoft Software Co. Inc. in Lansing, New York, agrees. "When I went into business, I made believe this was a real business. I always answered the phone in a professional voice and referred to the company as 'we.' Now that it is an established business five years later, I haven't had to change much," he says.

Market Creatively

While it is essential that you not mislead prospective clients about your company's size, you certainly don't have to advertise it. A few common marketing techniques go far in controlling the image you project.

Nigel Peacock, International Trade Forum sysop and a principal of Aircheck Limited, a Tunbridge Wells, Kent–based company that prepares U.K. executives for radio and television appearances, credits his company's solid image to creative marketing.

Peacock makes sure his company is listed in trade directories (often, such listings are free), and he regularly supplies press releases and photographs to related industry magazines. The company's brochure and logo were professionally designed and printed in a high-quality glossy format. All training classes he conducts take place on the clients' premises or in rented facilities such as hotel conference centers or broadcasting studios.

"We never tell anyone how small we are, we never tell them we all work part-time, and we never tell them we work from a single small room," says Peacock. "The lesson to pass on: Never lie about how small you are, but never volunteer it either."

Provide Top-Quality Customer Service

All business is built on personal relationships. "Impeccable customer service speaks for itself, whether from a home-based business or a 100,000-square-foot monolith," says Vicki L. Clift, assistant sysop in the Entrepreneur's Small Business Forum and a small-business columnist for *Marketing News.*

Jeffrey Sherman, president of Warever Computing Inc., a home-based business in Los Angeles, California, agrees. "You have to give something that the bigger companies don't always give —individual attention to the client's needs."

Knowing some large computer-consulting and repair firms apply standard answers to clients' problems, Sherman has honed his listening skills. After a client explains its situation, he suggests a solution unique to that company. "It's the best solution for them, not the one that will make me the most money or that requires parts I happen to have in stock," he says.

When it comes to customer service, small size has its own natural advantages. Custom-

PERSONAL ENTERPRISE

Where to GO

Computer Database Plus
GO COMPDB

Entrepreneur's Small Business Forum
GO SMALLBIZ

International Trade Forum
GO ITFORUM

IQuest
GO IQUEST

ers always deal with the same one or two people, offering problem-solving consistency that bigger companies may struggle to provide. Being courteous, responsive, and accessible to customers earns your business credibility and a solid reputation no matter what its size.

PERSONAL ENTERPRISE

Use Telecommunications

Clever and savvy use of telecommunications, such as toll-free 800 numbers and fax-on-demand, can give your company a cutting-edge image.

William Shaw and Shauna Beasley Shaw, owners of Software Exchange in Brandon, Florida, rely on the telephone for customer support. They've installed a toll-free 800 number backed up by "smart" features offered by their local telephone company that allow them to handle up to seven callers on a single line. Voice mail and a paging system keep them available to their customers after hours. Most important, they return all calls within an hour.

Shauna says telecommunications has diminished size discrimination. "We have utilized phone technology to assure customers they are doing business with a service-oriented company of adequate resources."

Even if you don't need a toll-free number, consider installing a business phone system that allows multiple incoming calls so clients don't get a busy signal. Use three-way calling from your local telephone company to conduct multiple conference calls. Install music on the hold button, something that is common in the corporate world and almost unheard of for a home-based business.

Use Small as a Selling Point

Doing business from a spare room is bound to become more accepted in the not-too-distant future, but those who make their living at home now need to work harder than other companies at portraying a professional image. One way to do this is to turn size into a selling point.

While Debra Goldentyer, a writer and video producer with Schaeffer & Goldentyer in Oakland, California, doesn't flaunt the small size of her two-person company to potential clients, she isn't shy about touting its advantages to defuse their concerns. "We try to show the positive aspects of working with us instead of the big guys," she says. Those advantages include working directly and exclusively with the company's principals, contacting them any time of the day or night, and not paying hidden charges to cover expensive office overhead.

Tap CompuServe as a Resource

When clients voice concerns about a company's small size the issue may not actually be one of size but rather one of resources. CompuServe's online information and support can help level the playing field.

Tony Pynes, owner of Professional Copywriting Services in Dallas, Texas, creates brochures and manuals for high-tech and industrial companies. Recently, a firm specializing in automation solutions agreed to meet with him to discuss the development of a new brochure. Knowing nothing about automation applications, Pynes searched Computer Database Plus and IQuest for articles on the company.

"On the first try I found an article where the client's product had been part of an industry test case. The product's weaknesses and strengths were already organized for me," says Pynes. Armed with this information, he went to the meeting and quickly turned what had been scheduled as a freelance-job interview into a discussion of the product and how he thought it should be positioned.

"Other writers had tried to sell their services. I was able to become part of the team solving the problem. The client felt I understood them, and I got their business," says Pynes.

As such technology advances and the information highway goes mainstream, says Clift of the Entrepreneur's Small Business Forum, even the smallest companies will be empowered to do big work.

Cathryn Conroy is senior writer of CompuServe Magazine. *Her CompuServe User ID number is 70007,417.*

Online Augmentations: CompuServe Helps

Want to act like a big company? Even if you're a one-person show, CompuServe can be an expert resource that will support your home-based business with cutting-edge information. Here are some of the most useful online areas for entrepreneurs:

Join the Entrepreneur's Small Business and Working From Home forums to learn more about the process of running a business.

Join forums that support your type of business, such as the Computer Consultant's, Information Management, International Trade, Journalism, and Legal forums. They can help you stay current on professional developments and information, as well as help you make contacts and network within your industry. To locate appropriate forums, type FIND followed by your type of business or profession.

Offer electronic mail as a way for your clients to communicate with you. If a client is not a CompuServe member, perhaps CompuServe Mail's Internet gateway can serve as an electronic link. Your Internet address is 70000.000@compuserve.com (insert your own User ID number). For Internet correspondence, be sure to substitute a "." for the "," in your User ID number. CompuServe Mail also links you to members of these networks: Advantis, AT&T Mail 400, BT Messaging Services, Deutsche Bundespost, Infonet, MCI Mail, NiftyServe, SprintMail, Unisource Business Networks, and Western Union 400. To learn more about proper addressing for these networks, GO MAILHELP in CIM or type HELP at the CompuServe Mail main-menu ! prompt in ASCII.

Use CompuServe Mail's fax and telex features to send text messages to Group 3 facsimile machines worldwide and send and receive messages to and from any Telex I or Telex II machine worldwide. This is especially useful when you're traveling with your laptop and far from your fax machine.

Set up an Executive News Service electronic clipping folder to capture news articles on your industry or your clients. Articles are culled from leading wire services and newspapers worldwide, including the Associated Press, Reuters, Dow Jones, PR Newswire, United Press International, and *The Washington Post*.

Learn more about creative marketing that works for a small company by tapping the expertise of the PR and Marketing Forum, especially Library 7, "Marketing/AMA." Find general information using the keyword MARKETING or focus the search using such keywords as DIRECT MAIL or MULTIMEDIA.

To learn more about publishing brochures and other documents, using type artistically, and the ABCs of graphic design, consult the Desktop Publishing Forum. Search the libraries by keywords that focus on your area of interest, such as CLIP ART, DESIGN, or FONTS.

Stay abreast of clients and current business and industry trends through focused research in Business Database Plus, Newspaper Archives, Knowledge Index, and IQuest.

Assess your competition or your client's competitors using demographic research in Business Demographics, the Census Bureau's Cendata, Neighborhood Demographic Reports, Supersite, and US-State-County Reports.

—CC

Where to GO

Business Database Plus	GO BUSDB
Business Demographics	GO BUSDEM
Cendata	GO CENDATA
CompuServe Mail	GO MAIL
Computer Consultant's Forum	GO CONSULT
Desktop Publishing Forum	GO DTPFORUM
Executive News Service	GO ENS
Entrepreneur's Small Business Forum	GO SMALLBIZ
Information Management Forum	GO INFOMANAGE
International Trade Forum	GO ITFORUM
IQuest	GO IQUEST
Journalism Forum	GO JFORUM
Knowledge Index	GO KI
Legal Forum	GO LAWSIG
Neighborhood Demographic Reports	GO NEIGHBOR
Newspaper Archives	GO NEWSARCHIVE
PR and Marketing Forum	GO PRSIG
Supersite	GO SUPERSITE
US-State-County Reports	GO USSTCN
Working From Home Forum	GO WORK

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GO OLI for more information.

by Dan Kening

A harp guitar made by Orville Gibson, circa 1900 (top). A one-of-a-kind Les Paul Custom from Gibson, priced at $200,000 (right).

Guitar World section gives readers news that doesn't make print.

Perfectly Good Guitars

Musicians and fans with an electric "axe" to grind like online access to Gibson and *Guitar World*.

Guitarists and guitar lovers come in all ages, sexes, colors, and nationalities. But whether they play thrash-rock, tears-in-your-beer country, modern jazz, or the low-down blues, or are full-time musicians or rec-room pickers, they're all part of a community united by a common love for the instrument. That community extends to cyberspace and CompuServe, where both Gibson Guitar Corp. and *Guitar World* magazine are online in the Music Industry Forum.

"I knew there were accountants and programmers out there in cyber-land who go home at night, turn off their computers, and jack up their guitars," says Mike Lawson, Gibson marketing coordinator and leader of Section 6, "Gibson Guitar Corp." Lawson spearheaded the company's presence on CompuServe, making Gibson the first guitar maker to offer such a service. "The whole idea is to provide better support to our customers and to answer any questions they might have."

Nashville, Tennessee–based Gibson is arguably the most famous maker of guitars, basses, and other fretted instruments, and the company celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1994. A list of musicians known for playing Gibson guitars would read like a who's who of guitar greats. They range from jazz legend Charlie Christian to seminal rocker Chuck Berry, bluesman B. B. King, and members of rock bands such as the Beatles, Led Zeppelin, and Aerosmith to relative newcomers Guns N' Roses and Pearl Jam. And let's not forget electric guitar pioneer Les Paul, who, in the early '50s, designed and lent his name to some of the company's most popular models.

"The history of Gibson is pretty much the history of fretted instruments in the United States," says Alan Greenwood, editor and publisher of *Vintage Guitar* magazine. "The name Gibson conjures up quality and innovation in most guitarists' minds, and it's also one of the few guitar brand names that a non-guitarist would recognize."

Among the support and services Gibson offers online are historical information,

Dan Kening is a freelance writer and music columnist for the Chicago Tribune. *His CompuServe User ID number is 71154,467.*

RANDOM ACCESS

Where to GO

CompuServe CD Area
GO CCD

MIDI Forums
GO MIDI

Music Hall
GO MUSIC

Music Industry Forum
GO INMUSIC

GO GOODYEAR

And Win A Ride On The Goodyear Blimp

Goodyear is now online and we're celebrating with a Goodyear Blimp Ride Contest. Just type GO GOODYEAR for all the contest information and all the answers you need about Goodyear tires or the Goodyear retailer nearest you. It's all there.

So GO GOODYEAR now. You could find yourself sailing above the information superhighway on a ride for two in the Goodyear Blimp.

1 Grand Prize - ***Ride For Two In The Goodyear Blimp***
- includes airfare, two nights hotel accommodations and $200 spending money.

3 First Prizes - ***A set of four Goodyear Aquatred radials***

5 Second Prizes - ***$100 usage credits for CompuServe***

100 Third Prizes - ***A Goodyear racing hat***

RULES: No purchase necessary. Complete rules available online.

GOODYEAR

CompuServeCD's Virtual Guitar Lessons

If you've ever taken guitar lessons, you know how frustrating the experience can be. You may want to learn to play the solo from Stone Temple Pilots' "Vasoline," while your teacher wants you to practice "Merrily We Roll Along." Or maybe you're teaching yourself by reading the guitar tablature featured in various guitar magazines, and sometimes those numbers and squiggles on the staff just don't sound right when you strum them.

That's why Gibson Guitar Corp. joined forces with Gibson endorsee Bob Welch to create an interactive "virtual" guitar lesson that debuted in the July/August 1994 issue of *CompuServeCD*. The multimedia tutorial features the haunting opening guitar phrase, or "lick," from former Fleetwood Mac guitarist Welch's 1978 solo hit "Ebony Eyes." The lesson was created by Gibson marketing coordinator and online section sysop Mike Lawson and Welch, and resulted from conversations between Lawson and CompuServe MIDI forums administrator Jim Maki.

By playing the "Ebony Eyes" lick with a Gibson Nighthawk guitar hooked up to a MIDI controller, Welch and Lawson created a WAV file and sent it to a sequencer. Using the sequencer, they created a matching MIDI file that included the notation of the nine notes repeated three times that make up the guitar lick. By clicking on the resulting WAV file on *CompuServeCD*, budding guitarists hear an exact digital recording of the guitar lick Welch played. Users who load the MIDI file into a sequencer (such as WinJammer) can slow the pace of the guitar lick without changing its pitch. Using proper MIDI notation software, the file can be displayed in music notation and printed as hard copy.

"I think this is really the wave of the future," says the Nashville, Tennessee–based Welch. "In writing songs I use a combination of computer-based MIDI sounds and real instruments. This virtual guitar lesson is just one step ahead of that. It's also something I wish I'd had when I was learning to play. This is much more immediate. The combination of the MIDI file and the WAV file allows you to hear what the lick sounds like. The problem with learning guitar from notes on paper is that it doesn't show you how it's supposed to sound. With the virtual guitar lesson you can pull up the MIDI file, see the notes, and play it back at any speed you want."

Gibson's Lawson, who is working on a second interactive lesson featuring Jorma Kaukonen, founding member of Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna, sees promise in the concept. "I think people will eventually turn to things like this in lieu of one-on-one instruction. Just look at the market for guitar instructional videotapes since the advent of the VCR. I think the virtual-guitar-lesson concept will be a very resourceful tool."

While acknowledging that this first virtual lesson just scratched the surface, Welch also sees great potential in CD-ROM-based guitar instruction. "This is just a short little piece to introduce the concept, but it could easily be expanded," he says. "You could include an entire song rather than just a lick, include visuals showing where your fingers should be on the fret board, or even have a bouncing ball you could follow below the musical notation. This is really exciting stuff."

To order "Multimedia Comes to CompuServe," the July/August edition of *CompuServeCD*, or to become a regular CD-ROM subscriber, GO CCD.

—DK

online product registration, GIF images of its instruments, and interactive Windows Help files detailing product features. To celebrate its centennial, the company gave away a limited-edition $10,000 Les Paul Centennial model guitar in a Gibson trivia contest in CompuServe's Music Hall. There are also plans for online conferences with well-known Gibson endorsees such as Aerosmith's Joe Perry. Gibson is also offering "Virtual Guitar Lessons" on *CompuServeCD* with the likes of former Fleetwood Mac guitarist Bob Welch and Jorma Kaukonen of Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna.

RANDOM ACCESS

Atlanta, Georgia, recording-studio owner Gary Shetler, who already owns 12 relatively recent vintage Gibsons, bought his 13th Gibson as a result of an online dialogue with Lawson. "In replying to a question I had about my double-cutaway Les Paul Special, Mike mentioned that there was also a single-cutaway model available, and in the 'TV yellow' finish as well," he says. "Real neat! So I scurried over to my local Gibson retailer and ordered one. I wouldn't have even known it was available without that accidental comment from Mike."

While being online can be seen as a sales tool for Gibson, in reality it's much more than that. For example, company historian and author Walter Carter is available to help players get information on Gibson instruments they already own. He helped forum member James Walker precisely date his EB-3 bass guitar, provided Stephen Senderoff with information about his 1931 L-O acoustic, and has given Ben Board production details about his 1980 Sonex 180 Deluxe guitar.

According to "Gibson" section regular Jerry McGeorge, a customer-service executive for Jaguar automobiles in New Jersey, this attention to customer service represented by Gibson online is in sharp contrast to the attitude of many major guitar manufacturers in the '60s and '70s. "Back then companies like Gibson and [chief rival] Fender were very bottom-line-oriented, and their management was not really concerned with their customers' opinions," says McGeorge, a former member of the band Shadows of Knight (of "Gloria" fame) and current owner of a prized 1954 Gibson Les Paul. "Today, buyer and owner expectations are increasing steadily, and when companies respond appropriately to their customers' input, everyone benefits."

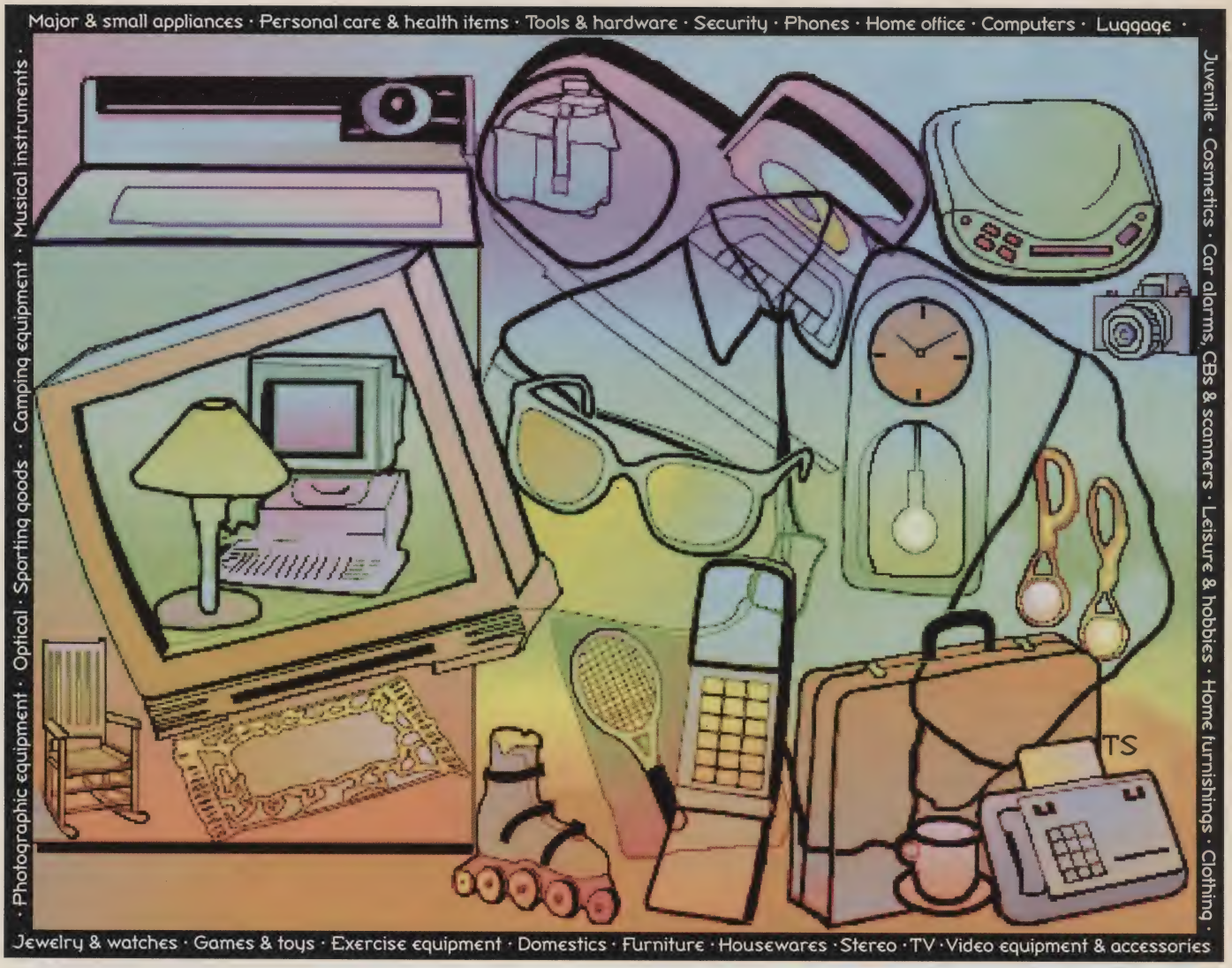
Lawson says product suggestions and criticisms posted in the "Gibson" message section are discussed in staff meetings with product managers, developers, designers, and engineers. The non-U.S. guitar market is also very important to Gibson, which distributes to 60 countries. "We're a global company in a global economy, and CompuServe is a global network," says Lawson.

That aspect is appreciated by Jeremy Shaw, a former rock-band member and owner of a Gibson L5-S. "The fact that there is a direct channel of communication to Gibson is most helpful," says Shaw, an information-center manager for Reebok U.K. based in Heysham, England. "They can tell you when a model will be released in the U.K., where spare parts are available, what custom options are offered, and so on. Also, the GIFs of the latest models are especially useful, because Gibson catalogs are hard to get hold of in the U.K."

By tying an established company with the ultramodern online medium, Gibson is looking to the future while celebrating its rich legacy. "Our current marketing theme is 'The Next 100 Years of Gibson,' " says Lawson. "Being on CompuServe is one of the ways in which we're planning to do that."

Equally as valuable as information about guitars is news of the stars who play them. That's where *Guitar World* and its various spin-off magazines, including *Guitar School* and *Country Guitar*, fit in. The New York–based publisher profiles such guitar players as Pearl Jam's Stone Gossard and Mike McCready, Pink Floyd's David Gilmour, bluesman Buddy Guy, and country star Vince Gill in its pages, in addition to featuring lessons from famous players, equipment reviews, and fret-by-fret guitar tablature of hit songs.

Now, with its section in the Music Industry Forum, *Guitar World* is offering even more to its readers. Editor-in-chief Brad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GO OLI for more information.

Legendary rockers and Gibson Guitar endorsees Aerosmith recently toured the CompuServe worldwide headquarters in Columbus, Ohio, during their *Get a Grip* U.S. tour. Aerosmith was the first band to release a complete song for downloading online when "Head First" was made available in the Recording Industry Forum (GO RECORD) last year. Earlier in the tour, each band member was presented with a $10,000 Gibson Centennial Guitar at the Gibson factory in Nashville, Tennessee. Pictured, from left, are Joe Perry, Steven Tyler, Brad Whitford, Joey Kramer, and Tom Hamilton.

Tolinski and associate editor Daniel Levine are omnipresent in Section 7, "Guitar World." They're online to answer any number of questions readers have, whether it's giving 17-year-old guitarist and songwriter Scott Gold advice on getting his songs heard, helping to diagnose amplifier problems, giving advance information on upcoming albums by Heart and Ted Nugent, or dispelling rumors about the breakup of grunge rockers Alice in Chains. One forum member, Tim Kennedy, about to leave for Europe, was given Pink Floyd's European tour schedule so he could see the band he missed during its U.S. leg.

RANDOM ACCESS

"Magazines can be limiting," says Tolinski. "We have X number of pages to deal with every month, and there are a lot of outside edges, fringe artists, and interesting bits of information about guitar gear that just won't fit into the magazine format. Being on CompuServe is a nice way for us to share all those extra things with the readers." Tolinski adds that the online feedback from readers about the artists featured, the regular columns, and equipment reviews is invaluable in planning future coverage. And if you've ever read *Guitar World*'s letters-to-the-editor page, you'll know readers aren't shy about giving editors a piece of their mind.

Guitar World's Library 7 in the Music Industry Forum includes articles from past issues. Some of them, such as the interview with Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan, feature the full text of articles that were edited for print. There are also buyer-oriented gui-

Strung Uploads: Guitar-Related Forum Files

From GIF files containing eye-popping pictures of Gibson dream guitars to articles from *Guitar World* magazine and guitar-chord finder programs from the MIDI/Music Forum, here are some files of interest to guitarists and bassists in cyberspace.

MIDI/Music Forum (GO MIDIFORUM)

FretPro 1.0—Demo of FretPro 1.0 for Windows, a shareware guitar-chord and scale reference. Program finds inversions of 61 chords in any tuning, finds scales, and contains a database of 15,000 fret-board fingerings. Chords and scales can be played in digital or MIDI sound. Library 11, "Windows Media Sound," FPDEMO.ZIP (264,283 bytes).

Ultimate Chord Chart—The "Ultimate Guitar Chord Chart II" by Phillip J. Facoline for printing a comprehensive chart of guitar chords. Requires a postscript printer or Ghostscript. Library 14, "Acoustic Instr.," CHORDS.ZIP (13,746 bytes).

Favorite Guitar Thread—"What's Your Favorite Axe?" message thread, in which MIDI/Music Forum members debate the relative merits of various "axes," better known to non-guitarists as "guitars." Library 14, FAVAXE.TXT (34,273 bytes).

Music Industry Forum (GO INMUSIC)

B. B. King's "Lucille"—A GIF image of blues legend B. B. King's latest signature-model Gibson "Lucille" guitar. Library 6, "Gibson Guitar Corp.," LUCILL.GIF (96,348 bytes).

Orville Gibson GIF—An early-20th-century photo of Orville Gibson, who founded the Gibson Guitar Corp. in 1894. Library 6, ORVILL.GIF (201,596 bytes).

Les Paul "Log Guitars"—A wild GIF image of guitarist Les Paul in 1950 with some of his experimental "log" solid-body guitars, which later resulted in his design of the famous Gibson Les Paul model guitar. Library 6, LES.GIF (248,747 bytes).

Rudolph Schenker on Gibson—A WAV sound file featuring Scorpions guitarist Rudolph Schenker backstage at a concert speaking about his Gibson guitars. Library 6, RUDOLP.ZIP (304,013 bytes).

Making Nighthawks—A Windows Help file containing an interactive walk-through of the various steps involved in the making of a Gibson Nighthawk electric guitar. Library 6, MAKING.HLP (578,516 bytes).

Buying an Acoustic Guitar—A never-before-published article by *Guitar World*'s Alan di Perna on what to look for when shopping for an acoustic guitar. Covers the various types of construction and woods used in acoustic guitars and how they affect an instrument's sound. Library 7, "Guitar World," ACOUST.TXT (18,887 bytes).

Choosing a Guitar—Can't tell a truss rod from a toilet seat? Here's a step-by-step shopping guide covering the basics of guitar construction and features from the March 1994 issue of *Guitar School*. Library 7, HOWTO.TXT (14,129 bytes).

Pink Floyd's David Gilmour—Wondering how Pink Floyd guitarist David Gilmour gets his trademark soaring sound? This interview with his guitar technician from the September 1994 *Guitar World* features text not published in the original story. Library 7, PINKTE.TXT (7,343 bytes).

Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan—The guitarist and front man of 1994 Lollapalooza headliners Smashing Pumpkins offers tips on how he gets his neo-psychedelic sound in this article from the September 1994 *Guitar School*. Library 7, SMASH.TXT (19,335 bytes).

Jimmy Page Interview—An in-depth interview with Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page sharing his fretwork secrets and pre-Zeppelin session career, among other topics, from the December 1993 issue of *Guitar World*. Library 7, PAGE.TXT (52,407 bytes).

The Gibson Double Neck SG in cherry finish.

tar articles available, as well as multimedia-application WAV files that allow those with sound cards to aurally compare such guitar-related gear as reverb units. Arkansas college student Anne Jenkins downloaded an article on what to look for when shopping for an acoustic guitar. "The article proved very helpful to me, since I am considering buying another acoustic guitar in the near future," she says.

The access *Guitar World*'s staff has to the stars gave a big boost to San Francisco bassist and songwriter Neal Melton, who was feeling frustrated about his musical progress. He mentioned he was a big fan of alternative rocker Matthew Sweet, and sysop Levine offered to pass on any questions he might have directly to Sweet. The result? A direct reply from Sweet to Melton, which Levine posted in the "Guitar World" message section. "That was wonderful," says Melton. "How many people get a letter from their idol? He gave me some great advice and, more importantly, some confidence." Says Levine, "I know what it's like to be a fan and to want more information on an artist than is generally available. I feel an obligation to get people into this world."

Interaction between section visitors is also encouraged. Donal Higgins, a software-company director and guitarist in Dublin, Ireland, traded information on his guitar hero Stevie Ray Vaughan with American section member Adolph Lopez, who offered to send him hard-to-find Vaughan instructional tapes and transcriptions. "I think part of the attraction of the 'Guitar World' section is that it's a meeting place for like-minded people, no matter where they live," says Higgins.

Future plans for *Guitar World* include holding online conferences with some of the artists and columnists featured in the magazine. "Billy Gibbons from ZZ Top was in the office the other day, saw what we were doing online, and said he wanted to do a conference with us," says Levine. Wonder if he'll be wearing his virtual "cheap sunglasses"?

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by Cathryn Conroy

PAUL MONTGOMERY

A Concourse for Newcomers

Visit the New Member Welcome Center, even if you aren't new.

No matter how long you've been a CompuServe member, sometimes it's easy to forget where to GO for the information you need, even the basics. Do you know where to go, for instance, to change your address? How about to download CIM upgrades, find a telephone access number, or contact Customer Service? The New Member Welcome Center is an online oasis developed to offer direction to new CompuServe members, but it is also a useful resource for savvy CompuSurfers who suddenly find themselves on the cyber-road without a map.

Free of CompuServe connect-time charges, the New Member Welcome Center includes on its main menu:

The New Member Help Desk, for answers from the Customer Service Help Database on the most frequently asked questions about using CompuServe, including such topics as costs, changing your password, accessing billing information, ordering from CompuServe, extended character support, CB Simulator, and other services. The CompuServe Information Manager Support forums are accessible from the Help Desk main menu.

The New Member Forum, for information about any aspect of using CompuServe. The forum has message sections devoted to such topics as CompuServe Mail, online etiquette, pricing information, accessing CompuServe, and a section for help in finding specific services. In Section 3, "How Do I . . .," members learn the how-to's of database searching, downloading, and viewing GIF and other graphic images by posting messages and getting advice from the forum's experts. Section 16, "Ask Customer Service," lets you communicate directly with CompuServe representatives, and if you haven't yet mastered file uploading, visit Library 10, "Upload Test File," to practice.

CompuServe Service Highlights, a quick reference guide to some of CompuServe's most popular services.

101 Great Things to Do on CompuServe offers ideas for fun and useful things to do online.

Tips for New Members contains suggestions on how to make using CompuServe easier and instructs on where to go for information.

"Even veteran CompuServe members can suddenly decide to learn more about an area of the Information Service that they haven't yet used," says New Member Forum sysop Sue Thornburg. "We're here for everyone."

New CompuServe members should make the New Member Welcome Center one of their first stops online. "Logging onto CompuServe for the first time is a little like arriving in a country where you don't speak the language and haven't mastered the currency," says Cindy Morgan Dale, CompuServe promotions specialist. "The New Member Welcome Center is a safe haven where members can go to get the lay of the land through one central source of information." After spending some time visiting the New Member Welcome Center, new members have a chance to test their newly acquired CompuServe I.Q. and earn up to $10 in connect-time credit, plus take a new-member survey.

Mastering CompuServe means learning how to perform a number of online tasks, whether it's making a purchase in the Electronic Mall or conducting a search in Magazine Database Plus. Sysops Thornburg and Mike Shoenbach offer the following advice for increasing the speed of newcomers' electronic learning curve:

- Explore the more than 70 basic services included in the $8.95 monthly membership fee to become acquainted with what CompuServe has to offer, then explore extended services.
- First become familiar with a similar group of services, such as the forums, before moving on to other types of areas, such as research databases.
- Before doing a database search, download to your computer and read offline the online help instructions. Keep a printout of the instructions by your side for ready reference when you're online.
- Post your questions in the various online help forums. Remember, no question is too basic, and the time you spend in these forums is free of connect-time charges.
- Learn how to post a forum message by sending it to your own User ID number in the Practice Forum.

Much like the roadside welcome centers dedicated to helping travelers around the world, the New Member Welcome Center's mission is to point members in the right direction and help them get the most out of their CompuServe membership. For a listing of other CompuServe help areas, see "Online Help," on p. 46.

Cathryn Conroy is senior writer of CompuServe Magazine *and book-review editor of Online Today. Her CompuServe User ID number is 70007,417.*

See "Online Help," page 46, and "New-Member Files," page 48.

RANDOM ACCESS

Where to GO

New Member Forum
GO NEWMEMBER

New Member Welcome Center
GO WELCOME

Practice Forum
GO PRACTICE

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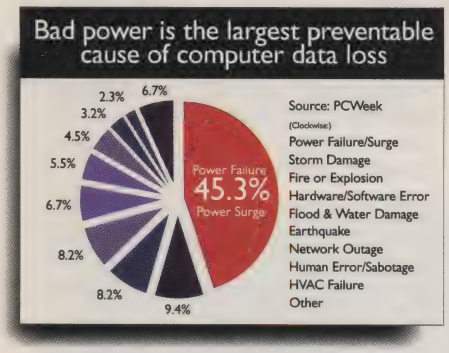

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Other Online Help Areas

CompuServe offers several help forums—all free of connect-time charges—devoted to specific areas of the Information Service. Following are several common stops for assistance:

New Member Forum (GO NEWMEMBER) is a must-visit resource for getting answers to questions about most aspects of using CompuServe.

CompuServe Help Forum (GO HELPFORUM) is the place to ask specific questions about such topics as how to upload a CompuServe Mail message, conduct a search in IQuest, or use the IBM or Macintosh File Finder. It's like having your own personal tutor.

Practice Forum (GO PRACTICE) lets you learn about forums and how to effectively use them within the ASCII, text-based interface. Practice reading and posting forum messages, search and download library files, and read text files about conferencing.

CompuServe also offers support forums for specific software programs:

WinCIM Support Forum (GO WCIMSUP) provides support for users of CompuServe Information Manager, Windows version—better known as WinCIM. Here, ask questions about using English, French, and German WinCIM, including installation, upgrading, modems, and more.

DOSCIM Support Forum (GO DCIMSUP) will answer questions on using the English, French, and German IBM PC-compatible versions of CompuServe Information Manager.

MacCIM Support Forum (GO MCIMSUP) provides assistance with the Macintosh version of CompuServe Information Manager. For questions on French MacCIM, GO FMCIMSU; for questions on German MacCIM, GO DMCIMSU.

OS/2-CIM Support Forum (GO OCIMSUP) offers answers to questions on the use of CompuServe Information Manager for OS/2.

Navigator Support Forum (GO NAVSUP) provides help to users of CompuServe's Navigator program, while the **CSNav-Win Support Forum** (GO CSNAV) provides assistance with the Windows version of CompuServe Navigator.

CompuServe Applications Forum (GO CSAPPS) offers information and support for CompuServe's MS Mail Driver, CompuServe Mail PowerTalk, CompuServe for GEOS, and the Filing Cabinet Copy Utility.

CD Support Forum (GO CCDSUP) offers information about *CompuServeCD*, a multimedia extension of the CompuServe Information Service.

—*CC*

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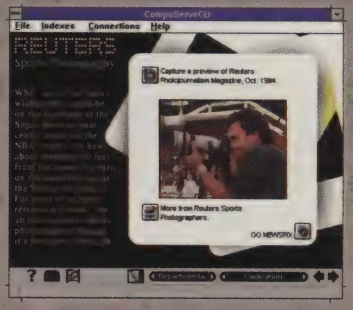
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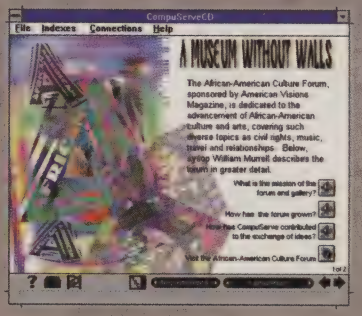
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A MUSEUM WITHOUT WALLS
The African-American Culture Forum, sponsored by American Visions Magazine, is dedicated to the advancement of African-American culture and arts, covering such diverse topics as civil rights, music, travel and relationships. Below, sysop William Murrell describes the forum in greater detail.
What is the mission of the forum and gallery?
How has the forum grown?
How has CompuServe contributed to the exchange of ideas?
Visit the African-American Culture Forum
1 of 2

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New-Member Files

The New Member Forum (GO NEWMEMBER) libraries are packed with useful files on such topics as CompuServe Mail, forums, pricing, reference products, CompuServe software, accessing CompuServe, and more. Here is a sample of help files.

Compressed Files—A general overview of various file-compression formats and where to locate the appropriate decompression utilities. Library 1, "General Information," COMPRS.DOC (19,157 bytes).

Executive Option—Information about CompuServe's Executive Service Option. Library 1, EIS.TXT (5,395 bytes).

Financial-Symbols Listing—List of the index and indicator symbols available for CompuServe's financial services in the current-day quote areas (GO BASICQUOTE, GO QQUOTE, and CIM's Quote function). Library 1, CURQUO.TIC (8,859 bytes).

CompuServe's Fax Service—Documentation for CompuServe Mail's fax feature. Library 2, "CompuServe Mail," FAX.DOC (35,451 bytes).

WinCIM Q&A—Answers to many questions about WinCIM, CompuServe Information Manager for Windows. Library 3, "How Do I . . .," WINHLP.FAQ (34,426 bytes).

How to Print GIF Images—Explanation of how to print such GIF images as weather maps in Windows 3.1. Library 3, GIFPRT.TXT (776 bytes).

List of Forums—Text file listing all available CompuServe forums as of October 1, 1994, listed in alphabetical order by Service Name/Description. Includes the GO word for accessing each service. Library 8, "Directory of Forums," INDEX.LST (47,753 bytes).

Forums and Sections List—Listing of more than 500 CompuServe forums, their message sections, libraries, and conference rooms. Library 8, FORSEC.ZIP (126,554 bytes). Decompress the file with a ZIP utility. Read the file COMPRS.DOC (listed above) to find the right unzipping program and other compression/decompression utilities.

Knowledge Index Information—Contains general info about the Knowledge Index research database (GO KI). Includes a listing of available databases with a short description of each, pricing, hours of availability, terms, and conditions. Library 12, "Reference Products," KI.TXT (37,776 bytes).

Changing Your Password—How to change your password in CIM's Session Settings, or delete the password currently installed. Library 15, "Accessing GIFs," CHGPSW.HLP (1,139 bytes).

Stop Line Noise—Message thread containing several suggestions from Practice Forum members on how to reduce or eliminate line noise that can interrupt modem connections. Library 15, NOISE.THD (18,076 bytes).

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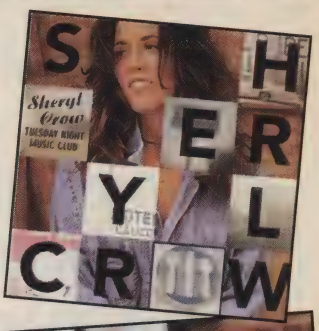

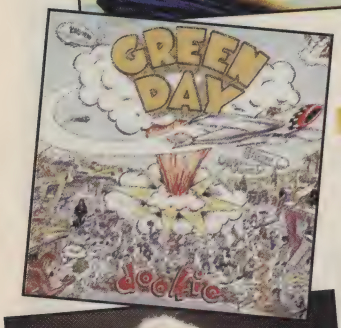

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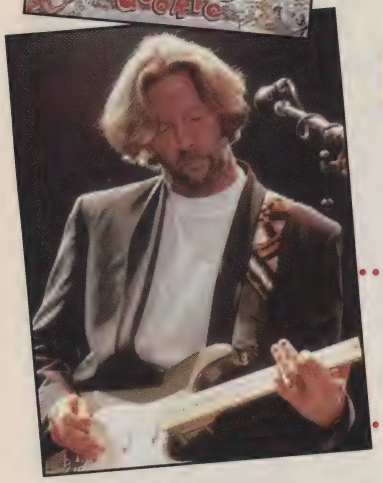

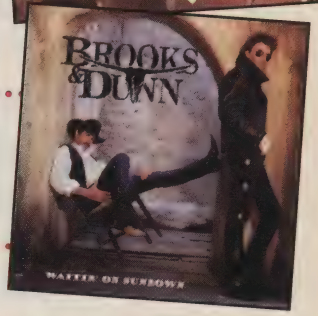

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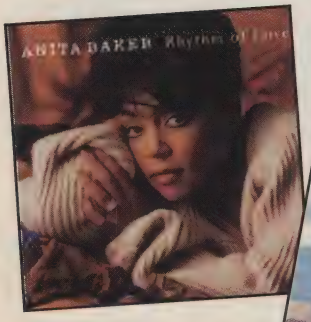

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TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

500 miles from nowhere, it'll give you a cold drink or a warm burger...

NASA space flights inspired this portable fridge that outperforms conventional fridges, replaces the ice chest and alternates as a food warmer.

Recognize the ice cooler in this picture? Surprisingly enough, there isn't one. What you see instead is a Koolatron, it replaces the traditional ice cooler, and its many limitations, with a technology even more sophisticated than your home fridge. And far better suited to travel. Plus, the innocent looking portable refrigerator before you is also a food warmer.

NASA inspired portable refrigerator. Because of space travel's tough demands, scientists had to find something more dependable and less bulky than traditional refrigeration coils and compressors. Research led them to discover a miraculous solid component called the thermo-electric module. The governing module, no bigger than a matchbook, actually delivers the cooling power of a 10 pound block of ice.

From satellites to station wagons. Koolatron is the first manufacturer to make this technology available to families, fishermen, boaters, campers and hunters- anyone on the move. Now for the price of a good cooler and one or two seasons of buying ice, all the advantages of home cooling are available for you electronically and conveniently.

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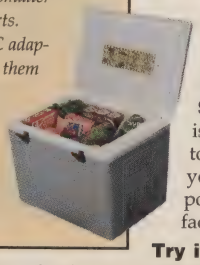
The versatile Koolatron

The Koolatron comes in two sizes. The P24A holds 30 quarts and the smaller P9 holds 7 quarts. An optional AC adaptor lets you use them in your rec room, patio or motel room. They plug into any regular outlet.



Koolatron (P24A) holds 30 quarts.....**$99** $12 S&H
Koolatron (P9) holds 7 quarts ..... **$79** $8 S&H
Optional AC Adaptor (AC 10) .....**$39** $6 S&H

Please mention promotional code 022-CV1112.

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Midlothian, Virginia 23113

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GUIDE TO SHOPPING ON THE COMPUSERVE INFORMATION SERVICE

THE ELECTRONIC M·A·L·L®

JANUARY 1995

COMPUTER EXPO

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See Pages 2 – 7

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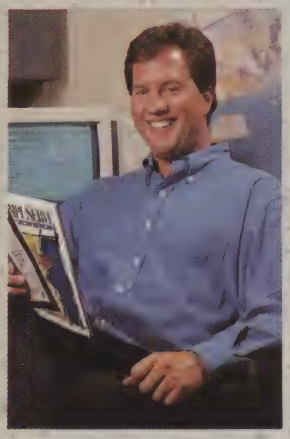


Dear Mall Shopper:

Welcome this month to The Mall's Third Annual online Computer Expo. The Expo has proved to be one of our most popular events and we've got even more excitement in store this year. You'll find special offers, contests and games, prizes, gifts and much more. Details are on page 7.

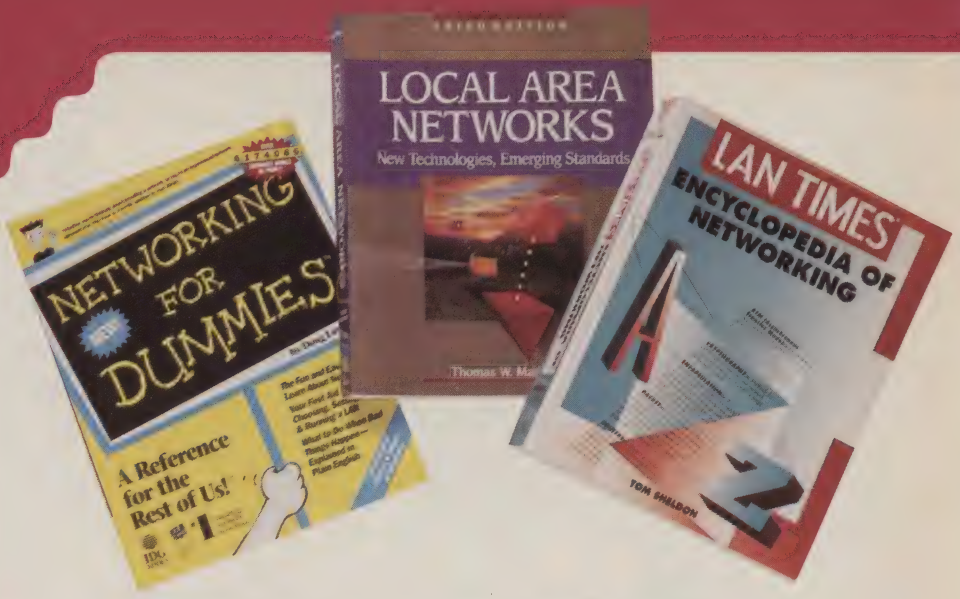
You won't want to miss the great computer shopping during the Computer Expo, either. We've pulled together a terrific selection of innovative new products and super savings guaranteed to make your PC work harder and smarter.

This month we welcome four new merchants to CompuServe — United Way Online (GO UW), A – Z Multimedia SuperShop (GO MM), SUCCESS*tools*™ (GO SUCCESS) and Information USA (GO IUM). Stop in and shop these new stores — and any Mall store — connect-free, 24 hours a day.

Enjoy the Expo and happy shopping!

See you online,

Keith Arnold
Electronic Mall Manager



Master the Zen of networking with books from the Small Computer Book Club.

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BRODERBUND SOFTWARE. GO BB
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SIERRA ON-LINE. GO SI
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DALCO COMPUTER ELECTRONICS. GO DA
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PENNY WISE OFFICE PRODUCTS. GO PW
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COMPUTER EXPRESS. GO EXPRESS

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Move into the fast lane with the Magnum 288 fax/modem for your Mac!

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MACWAREHOUSE. GO MW
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MICROWAREHOUSE. GO MCW
MAGNUM 144 MODEM $99

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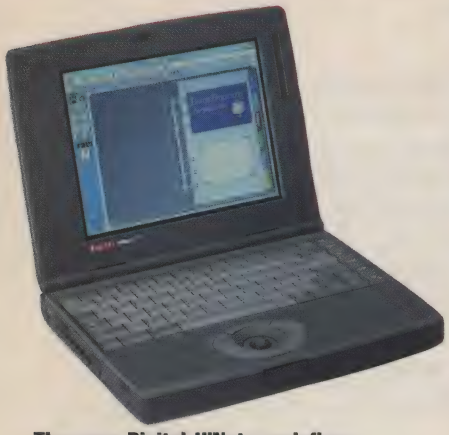

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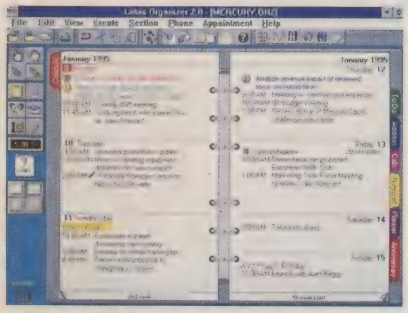
DIGITAL PC STORE. GO DD



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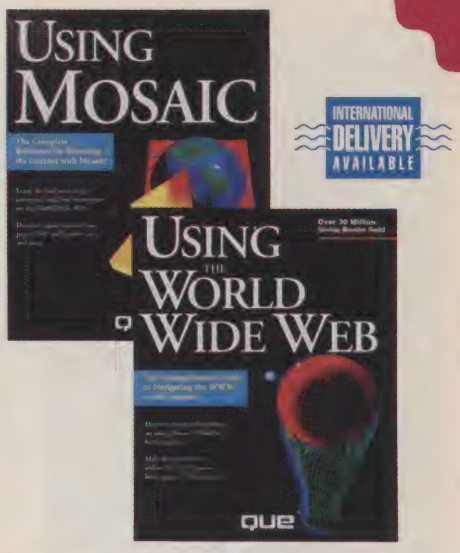
PC PUBLICATIONS. GO PCB



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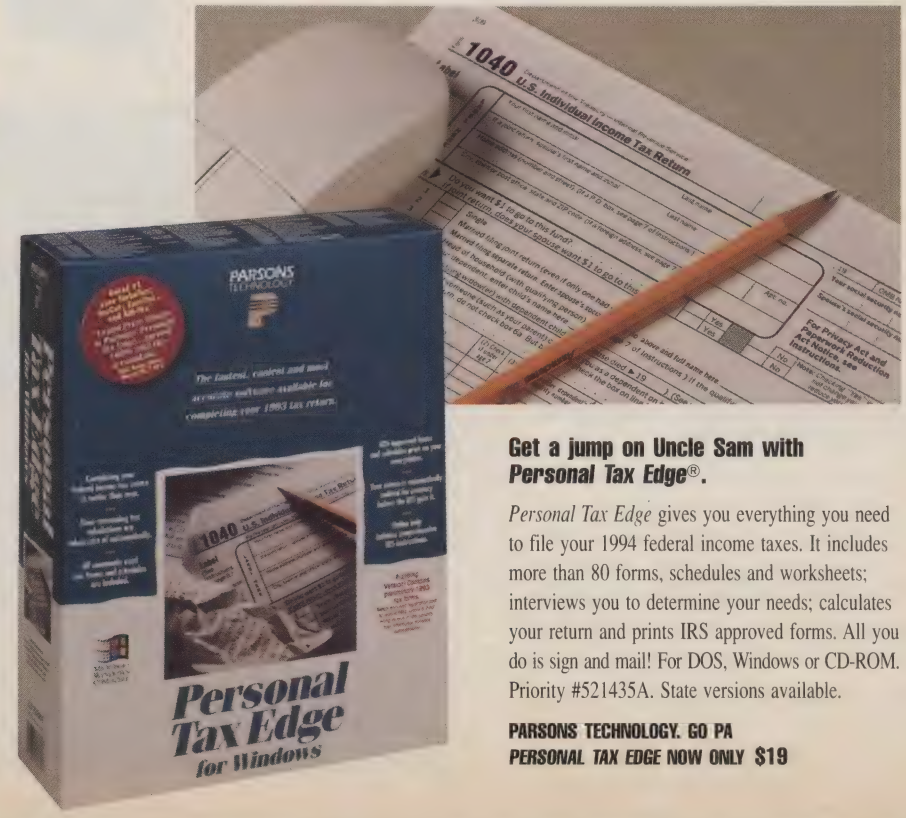

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FLORIDA FRUIT SHIPPERS. GO FFS
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ROCK VIDEO MONTHLY. GO RVM

The 1995 Ford Windstar — drive the future of minivans today.

Windstar offers the interior space of a minivan with a smooth car-like ride. Standard safety features include air bags to supplement the safety belts for both driver and front passenger, a 4-wheel anti-lock braking system, a front-end "crush zone" and side door intrusion beams. Go online for details and to view or download color graphics. **Free** brochure!

FORD ELECTRONIC SHOWROOM. GO FORD

COMPUTER EXPO

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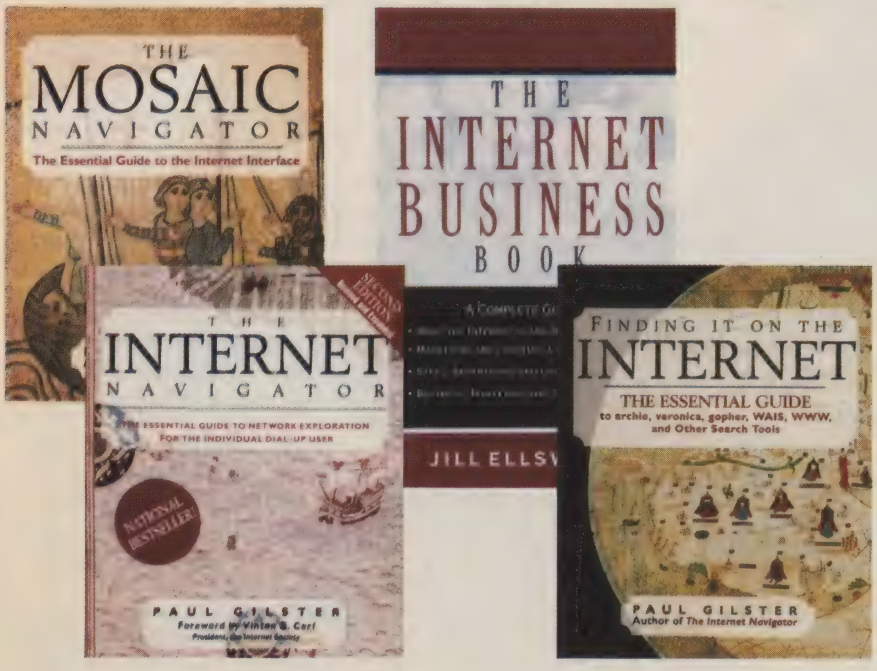
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The Essential Guide to the Internet Interface
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THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE
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ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING ONLINE. GO ZD

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No matter which pricing plan you have on CompuServe, shopping The Electronic Mall is connect-free, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

APPAREL/DEPT. STORES

AK	Alaska Peddler
AC	Americana Clothing
AU	Austad's ●
BR	Brooks Brothers
HS	Hammacher Schlemmer
LEGGS	Hanes L'eggs Bali Playtex JMS ●
HSV	Home Shopping Values ●
JCP	JCPenney ■
LANDS	Lands' End
PFS	Paul Fredrick MenStyle
SR	Sears Shop At Home ●
SA	Shoppers Advantage Online ●
SHOES	Stuart McGuire Shoes ●

ARTS/MUSIC/VIDEO

BBCM	BBC Magazine
CD	BMG Music Service ●
BOT	Books on Tape ●
▼ HIFI	Cambridge SoundWorks
FREECD	Columbia House ●
CCV	Critics' Choice Video ●
▼ ESTORE	Entertainment Drive Ltd. ●
EWK	Entertainment Works ■
JR	Justice Records
LE	The Laser's Edge
MMA	The Metropolitan Museum of Art
NP	Narada Productions
COUNTR	New Country Music Magazine
ROCKVI	Rock Video Monthly
▼ SGM	Sega Mall
VID	Time Warner Viewer's Edge ●

AUTOMOBILES

AI	Automobile Information Center
AQ	AutoQuot-R
ATV	AutoVantage Online ●
CMC	Cadillac Motor Car ●
ESCORT	The Escort Store
FC	Ford Credit ■
FORD	Ford Electronic Showroom ■
FMC	Ford Motor Company ■
LM	Lincoln-Mercury Electronic Showroom ■
PON	Pontiac Showroom ●

BOOKS/PERIODICALS

BOMC	Book-of-the-Month Clubs ●
BOT	Books On Tape ●
CCB	Children's Book-of-the-Month Club ●
CBK	CompuBooks
DB	Data Based Advisor
DFP	Detroit Free Press
ENT	Entrepreneur Group ●
PWM	Exec/Direct
FCB	Fortune Book Club ●
HAR	HarperCollins Online ●
HCB	History Book Club ●
▼ IUM	Information USA
IB	Investor's Business Daily
LOS	Library of Science Book Club ●
ZD	MacUser
MSP	Microsoft Press ■
MH	McGraw-Hill On-Line Bookstore
NN	NewsNet ■
PCC	PC/Computing
ZD	PC Magazine
PCB	PC Publications
PRC	PRC Database Publishing
PTR	PTR Prentice Hall ●
QPB	Quality Paperback Book Club ●
RANDOM	Random House Electronic Publishing
BK	Small Computer Book Club ●
TWEPB	Time Warner Elect. Pub. Bookstore
USM	U.S.News & World Report
WGL	WG&L/Auerbach
JW	Wiley Pro-Shop ●
WS	Windows Sources
ZD	Ziff-Davis Publishing Online

CLUBS/MEMBERSHIPS

ATV	AutoVantage Online ●
CD	BMG Music Service ●
BOMC	Book-of-the-Month Clubs ●
CCB	Children's Book-of-the-Month Club ●
FREECD	Columbia House ●
FCB	Fortune Book Club ●
LOS	Library of Science Book Club ●
DINE	Premier Dining ●
QPB	Quality Paperback Book Club ●
SA	Shoppers Advantage Online ●
BK	Small Computer Book Club ●
TA	Travelers Advantage ●

COMPUTER HARDWARE/ SUPPLIES

DP	AT&T Online Store ■
▼ MM	A - Z Multimedia SuperShop
CE	Computer Express
CA	Concord Direct
DA	Dalco Computer Electronics
DD	Digital PC Store ●
HTH	The Heath Company
JDR	JDR Microdevices
MW	MacWarehouse
MZ	Mac Zone/PC Zone
MCS	Mission Control Software
MCW	MicroWarehouse
PA	Parsons Technology
PCA	PC Catalog ●
SR	Sears Shop At Home ●

COMPUTER SOFTWARE

▼ MM	A - Z Multimedia SuperShop
ABSOLU	Absolut Museum
BB	Broderbund
CF	CheckFree Corporation ●
ORDER	CompuServe Store ★
CE	Computer Express
DD	Digital PC Store ●
EP	Epic MegaGames
PWM	Exec/Direct
HTS	Hybrid Technical Systems
IBMPSP	IBM Personal Software Products ●
JDR	JDR Microdevices
LTM	The Lotus Organizer Store ●
MW	MacWarehouse
MZ	Mac Zone/PC Zone
MCS	Mission Control Software
MCW	MicroWarehouse
PA	Parsons Technology
PCA	PC Catalog ●
SAF	Safeware Computer Insurance
SD	Shareware Depot ■
SI	Sierra On-Line
SP	Softdisk Publishing
▼ WP	WordPerfect Store

FINANCE/INSURANCE/ REAL ESTATE

BNBG Bull & Bear •
INC Business Incorporating Guide
CTB Centerbank Mortgage •
CF CheckFree Corporation •
▼ CMS CMS Home Mortgage Corp •
CNL CNL Customer Direct •
CORP The Company Corporation
CARD CompuServe Visa Store •
CIC Continental Insurancenter •
DR Dreyfus Corporation •
EAM Express America Mortgage •
FC Ford Credit ■
HRB H&R Block •
HF HomeFinder by AMS ■
IB Investor's Business Daily •
TKR Max Ule Discount Brokerage ★
RELO Relocation Network •
SAF Safeware Computer Insurance
CRE Credentials Services •
TC Twentieth Century Mutual Funds

GIFTS/FLOWERS/ GOURMET FOODS

FGH 800-Flowers & 800-Gifthouse
AIF Adventures in Food ★
AK Alaska Peddler
BH Breton Harbor Gift Services
COF Coffee Anyone ???
FG Figi's Gifts •
FFS Florida Fruit Shippers ★
FS Flower Stop •
FTD FTD ONLINE
GS The Gift Sender
GIM Gimmee Jimmy's Cookies
GMR Green Mountain Coffee Roasters
HAL Hallmark Connections •
HAM Honey Baked Ham •
LBW Liquor by Wire
MMA The Metropolitan Museum of Art
OS Omaha Steaks ■
DINER Virginia Diner
WK Walter Knoll Florist

HOBBIES/TOYS/PETS

CAMP CAMPMOR •
GW Garrett Wade Woodworking
IAMS The IAMS Company •
▼ SGM Sega Mall
▼ TOM Tomorrow's Child

HOUSEWARES

BSET Bassett Furniture
CC Chef's Catalog •
BEDS Dial-A-Mattress •
HSV Home Shopping Values •
JCP JCPenney ■
SA Shoppers Advantage Online •

MERCHANDISE/ ELECTRONICS

▼ HIFI Cambridge SoundWorks
CA Concord Direct ★
CFD Crutchfield Electronics •
ESCORT The Escort Store •
HS Hammacher Schlemmer
HTH The Heath Company
HSV Home Shopping Values •
HTS Hybrid Technical Systems •
JCP JCPenney ■
▼ MCP Millennium Power System •
SA Shoppers Advantage Online •
SUN Sunglasses, Shavers and More

OFFICE SUPPLIES/ BUSINESS SERVICES

INC Business Incorporating Guide
CORP The Company Corporation
ORDER CompuServe Store ★
CARD CompuServe Visa Store •
HRB H&R Block •
TTS H&R Block Tax Training School •
HF HomeFinder by AMS ■
PWP Penny Wise Custom Print Shop •
PW Penny Wise Office Products •
RELO Relocation Network •
▼ SUCCES SUCCESS*tools*
UP University of Phoenix •
▼ UPS UPS Worldwide Services

PUBLIC SERVICES/ CHARITIES

CCF Christian Children's Fund
MDA The Muscular Dystrophy Association ■
▼ UW United Way Online •

SPORTS/FITNESS/HEALTH

AC Americana Clothing
AU Austad's •
CAMP CAMPMOR ■
CL Contact Lens Supply
RX Health & Vitamin Express
LENS Lens Express
SDV SDV Vitamins ★
SHOES Stuart McGuire Shoes •

TRAVEL/VACATIONS

AF Air France ■
ASU Airline Services Unlimited
AMZ Amazing Vacation Deals
CRUISE Compu-Cruise by Rosenbluth
TA Travelers Advantage •

PAYMENT INFO ONLINE

CATALOG INFO ONLINE

WORLDWIDE SHIPPING

GO MALL
On CompuServe's Electronic Mall

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Shopping The Electronic Mall has never been easier! If you're using the latest version of *CompuServe Information Manager* (*CIM*) software, available for DOS, Macintosh and Windows, you'll find everything on one convenient screen. With the touch of a finger you can browse product descriptions, flip back and forth between products, view full-color GIF graphics, and order right on the spot. You can even store your name, address and credit card information in the database, so you don't have to type it in each time. To shop the Mall that never closes, GO MALL.

SHIPPING:

Shopping in most stores in The Electronic Mall is available to CompuServe members around the world. Certain postal, national and trade laws prevent certain Electronic Mall merchants from being able to ship their goods to all areas. The following guide will help you with your store selection:

• U.S. Only
■ U.S. and Canada
★ Please go online for details
All other merchants ship worldwide.

▼ The Electronic Mall is pleased to welcome our newest merchants!

NEW MERCHANT

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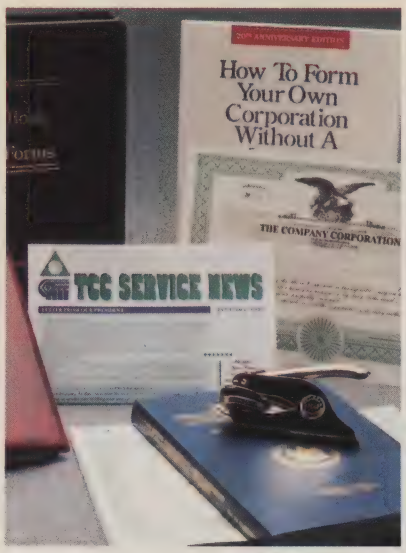

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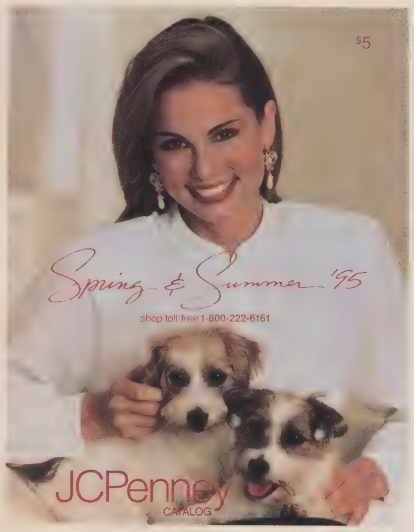

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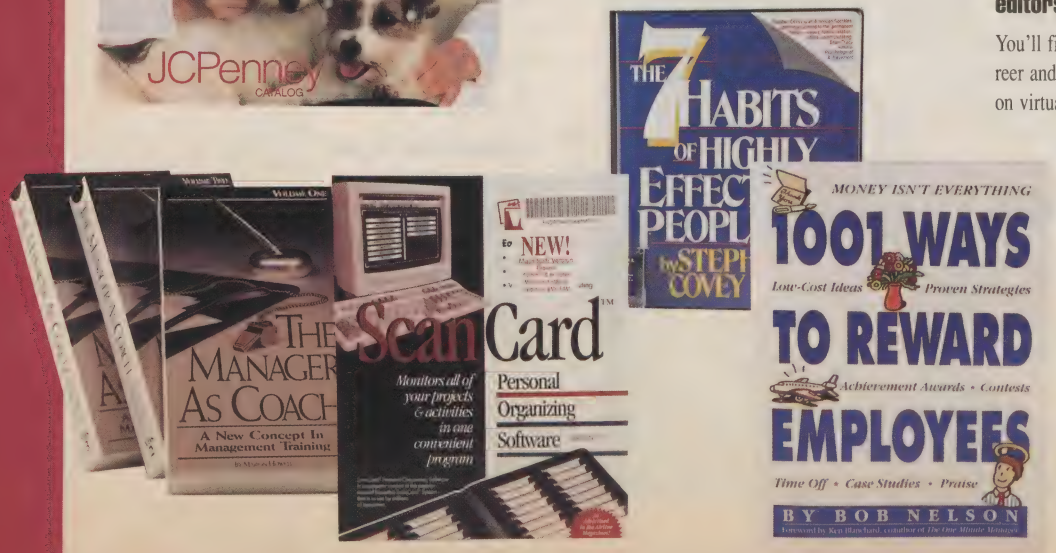

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* * * * *

CD-ROM ENLIGHTENMENT—Lots of good programs and information related to the ever present discs are available in the CD-ROM Forum (GO CDROM).

Library 1, "Getting Started"

What's Hot?—Find out in this monthly upload listing the best-selling Mac and Windows educational software and CD-ROM titles, rated by PC Data on a survey of retail outlets.

File names in format BSTSLR.* (14,000–27,000 bytes) T

Directory of Directories—Where to find a catalog of disc titles? This listing runs down 16 (print and CD formats), ranging in price from $5.95 to $600, with nine under $40.

DIRDIR.TXT (5,936 bytes) T

CD FAQ—From the Internet alt.cd-rom newsgroup, a frequently-asked-questions file (ZIPped text) covering CD-ROM basics and vendors.

CDROMF.ZIP (43,481 bytes) T

Library 10, "The Marketplace"

Vendor Catalogs—Browse this library for catalogs from CD-ROM sellers; popular downloads include the following:

STAR.EXE (approx. 64,000 bytes) D
CD_CAT.EXE (approx. 206,000 bytes) D
TOPSEL.ZIP (approx. 14,000 bytes) T

Library 11, "Windows, DOS, OS/2"

Installation How-to—A sprawling "mini-encyclopedia" on purchasing, installation, and use of a CD-ROM drive, with special sections on Sony and Toshiba equipment.

LASER3.TXT (200,784 bytes) T

GoCD—A Windows application to simplify the launching of CD-ROM-based software, replacing the many icons required for one application with one icon.

GOCD.ZIP (53,700 bytes) W

Key to Mentioned Files

A	Animation	O	OS/2
D	DOS	T	Text
G	Graphics	W	Windows
M	Macintosh		

Library 13, "CD Players/Audio"

CDDA—Perfect digital transfers from CD digital audio to hard disk in WAV or binary PCM format are possible with this freeware that supports most Toshiba, Sony, and NEC drives.

DA2WAV.ZIP (86,561 bytes) W

CD Wizzard—A full-featured audio CD player with real-time displays of track data and output, shuffle play, drag-and-drop programming, track sampling, and 1,000-disc database.

CDWIZZ.ZIP (181,561 bytes) W

COOKIN' GRAPHICS—Check out the Cooks Online Forum (GO COOKS) and its new Library 23, "Betty Crocker," for its special visual recipes right from Crocker's kitchens. You'll see what the dish ends up looking like, and the recipes are contained within the GIF's comment block, viewable when the file is opened in a viewing program. Popular downloads include Southwestern Chicken (SWCHIC.GIF), a fast Pasta Salad (ZEITPA.GIF), a white chili (WIWHCH.GIF), and Jamaican "jerked" chicken (JAMJCH.GIF). Also see BCMAIL.TXT (434 bytes) for info on writing Betty by e-mail. The visual recipes are generally 150,000–250,000 bytes in size. G

CYBER STUFF—Enter the strange, wonderful world where technology and the future collide in the Cyber Forum (GO CYBERFORUM).

Library 5, "Visual CompuServe"

CIM City—See an example of what CompuServe could look like in the future, in this GIF outtake from the demo version of VisCIS, a V.R. "city" interface built upon CIM data files.

SCNVS2.GIF (58,409 bytes) G

Library 7, "Gaming/Entertainm't"

Depth Dwellers—An intense action game (car-

This Month's FILE CLUSTER

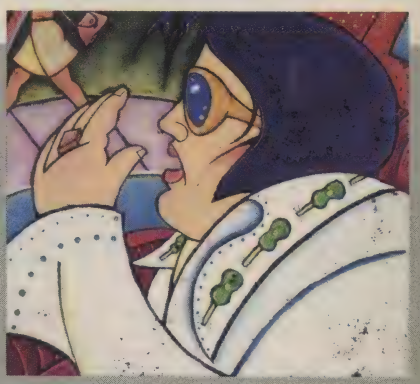
If it had peanut butter and banana on it, even the King might have swallowed the File Cluster, downloadable files from various CompuServe forums that make use of the same keyword. We honor what would have been our subject's 60th birthday this month: Swiveling in his "Blue Suede Shoes," he belted rockin' narratives; should you mix up his first, famed name, you know he surely LIVES: ELVIS.

Using Too Much QuickTan, Maybe?—We're not sure why, but "orange is the dominant color" in this close-up of the young Elvis. Archive Photos Forum (GO ARCHIVE), Library 7, "Music/Musicians," C11546.GIF (119,922 bytes). G

Animated Elvis—This tribute to Elvis Presley created with Autodesk Animator Pro demonstrates many of the image-processing effects possible with Animator Pro's ink system. In FLC format. Autodesk Multimedia Forum (GO ASOFT), Library 2, "Autodesk Animator," ELVIS.ZIP (155,794 bytes). A

If Only They'd Known—Photo of Elvis Presley and wife Priscilla preparing to leave the hospital on February 5, 1968, with their new daughter, Lisa Marie. (Insert Michael Jackson joke here.) Many other pix of the King in this library. Bettmann Archive Forum (GO BETTMANN), Library 6, "Stars & Showbiz," ELVIS7.GIF (100,227 bytes). G

Collectible King—A scan of perhaps the most stunning of the Elvis tributes on stamps, a nine-stamp issue from Palau, a U.S. trust territory. In GIF or JPEG format. Collectibles Forum (GO COLLECT), Library 2, "Stamps & Covers," ELVIS.GIF (418,816 bytes) or ELVIS.JPG (77,824 bytes). G



KRISTEN MILLEA

Signature Edition—The notarized scrawl of Elvis as it appears on page 12 of his last will and testament, scanned from an original court-certified copy in Memphis, Tennessee. Includes contact info for obtaining such a copy for a "fraction of the court fee." Collectibles Forum, Library 11, "Signatures," ELVISI.GIF (7,015 bytes). G

"Final Elvis"—Artist Dana Bonstrom created this image in Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator in response to the U.S. Postal Service's 1993 contest between "Young Elvis" and "Old Elvis" stamps. The image began as a personal joke but became something of a cult item in and around Boston. Computer Art Forum (GO COMART), Library 3, "Hall of Fame," EXELVI.GIF (132,270 bytes). G

Recording Elvis—A detailed account of a 1987 visit to the Boston Audio Society by famed engineer Bill Porter, who recorded Elvis Presley's early RCA hits. Includes many interesting stories of how records were made in the old days. Consumer Electronics Audio Forum (GO CEAUDIO), Library 9, "Misc. & Accessories," PORTER.TXT (33,895 bytes). T

You Look Familiar . . .—Elvis impersonators Rick Moreno and Michael Wroughton strike a pose in front of the Caesar's Palace marquee for the opening of Las Vegas's Planet

rying a violence warning to parents) in which you battle the demonic "Ri" in their cave dwellings. Features advancements in 3-D display, graphics, and music. Registered version can be played in stereoscopic mode.

DEPTH.ZIP (1,326,897 bytes) D

AcidWarp—Put on a Hendrix album and some headphones and stare at this nifty VGA "screen toy" that generates psychedelic shapes, ripples, and other effects that cycle through customizable color palettes. A small download, but big fun.

ACID.ZIP (26,240 bytes) D

Library 8, "Cyber Arts"

Show Solidarity—Join the fight to protect your online rights by using this "Cyber Rights Now" design by John Plunkett for buttons, T-shirts, and bumper stickers.

CYBER.GIF (5,640 bytes) G

Aural Mac Bliss—This color-customizable presentation, "Primordial Atmospheres," lets you hear a preview of the ambient-harmonic album by Mystical Sun. A special price is offered to downloaders.

PRIMOR.SEA (249,600 bytes) M

Library 13, "Art. Life/Intelligence"

Brain Backup—The (ZIPped) text of a new newsletter devoted to the concept of "uploading," the saving of a person's brain program, and data files as a form of insurance against death.

BBR.ZIP (33,634 bytes) T

Just the FAQ—The frequently-asked-questions file from the Internet newsgroups dealing with artificial intelligence. A good primer in ZIPped text format.

AIFAQ.ZIP (136,829 bytes) T

Library 16, "VR Demos"

Rendered Wonders—Two of several available animations produced by RenderWare and displayed at last year's SIGGRAPH convention: two knights fighting each other, and a navigable (and shoppable) virtual-reality store.

RWKNIG.ZIP (474,298 bytes) W
RWSHOP.ZIP (569,051 bytes) W

PC PASTIMES—Drop what you're computing and have some fun with that PC using the many fun programs in the IBM New Users Forum (GO IBMNEW).

Library 4, "Music"

PC Drummer—The exciting new version of the SoundBlaster drum-machine program, with programmable patterns and instrument placement within stereo channels, and more percussion instruments to work with. MIDI not required.

PCDRUM.ZIP (179,609 bytes) D

Library 5, "Fun Graphics"

Animated O's—A tiny TSR that makes all the lowercase "o"s on your text screen spin around while the machine is idle.

AO.ZIP (2,890 bytes) D

All Natural—Already tired of snow? This animated nature scene from Micro Madness has a running waterfall and stream, flying birds and butterflies, jumping fish, and a hungry frog. Registered version brings SoundBlaster support and the Snow winter scene.

NATURE.ZIP (136,296 bytes) D

Library 6, "Gen Fun & Games"

Wet and Wild—That best describes In Search of Dr. Riptide, an underwater seek-and-destroy adventure that matches you and quirky sidekick Jason against the elusive outcast scientist and his scuba-diving goons. Great graphics and music.

RIPTID.ZIP (775,960 bytes) D

Bolo Adventures—Soleau Software's strategy game tests your resourcefulness, not your reflexes, in getting out of 15 rooms filled with objects.

BOLO3.ZIP (124,288 bytes) D

Shooting Gallery—Just like being at a carnival, this series of seven arcade games takes you through a shooting range, skeet, quick-draw gunfight, and more. SoundBlaster support, scoring hall of fame, and practice mode are included.

SHOOTG.ZIP (215,850 bytes) D

Drives You Batty—It may win the the award for longest shareware game title, but Invasion of the Mutant Space Bats of Doom has also won numerous thumbs-up from magazine reviews as "insanely addictive."

BATS.ZIP (349,680 bytes) D

Library 12, "Windows Fun"

How Old Are Ya?—Find out with this app that calculates your age in everything from years to seconds. Keep a database of names and birthdates for instant recall/recalculation.

HOWOLD.ZIP (75,552 bytes) W

Hollywood. Entertainment Drive Forum (GO EFORUM), Library 15, "The Photo Gallery," ELVIS.GIF (136,810 bytes). G

Elvis, the Text Editor?—Yes, a freeware DOS clone of the well-known UNIX word processor. IBM Applications Forum (GO IBMAPP), Library 1, "Text Editors," ELV16X.ZIP (196,090 bytes). D

Sighting Spoof—The complete lyrics to Ray Stevens's "I Saw Elvis in a UFO," in which the King is spotted with harmonizing aliens, Jimmy Hoffa, and Judy Garland "in a pair of Imelda Marcos's shoes." 'Nuff said. Issues Forum (GO ISSUES), Library 10, "Unexpln'd Phenomena," UFO.FUN (2,565 bytes). T

Elvis as Virus?—Information about a Mac virus discovered in 1991 that infected HyperCard stacks. One "symptom" was the playing of the German Volkslied (popular song) "Muss I Denn," which was popularized internationally by Elvis Presley while in Germany during his army days. Macintosh Hypercard/Scripting Forum (GO MACHYPER), Library 1, "Help Here," HCVIR.TXT (2,226 bytes). T

Tiny Elvis—The King as both a Windows and pop-culture icon! He sits at the bottom of your desktop, every so often popping to his feet offering commentary on your "huge" icons, cursors, and other items (a sound card makes it intelligible), and gesturing Vegas-style. Freeware. See it to believe it. Multimedia Forum (GO MULTIMEDIA), Library 6, "Windows/DOS/OS-2," TELVIS.ZIP (151,633 bytes). W

Record Rundown—The track list for the three-CD *Sun Records Collection*, Rhino Records' 1994 box set featuring song classics recorded at Memphis's Sun Records and Studios, including Elvis doing "Good Rockin' Tonight" and "Baby, Let's Play House." Music/Arts Forum (GO MUSICARTS), Library 8, "Pop/Rock," SUN.TXT (3,520 bytes). T

Win Pelvis-n-Space—A cute Windows 3.1 game based loosely on Elvis and Graceland with lots of graphics and toolbars. So popular, Elvis Enterprizes made the author remove the word "Elvis." PC World Online Forum (GO PWOFORUM), Library 9, "Windows Games," WES100.ZIP (122,323 bytes). W

Stony Elvis—The statue of rock 'n' roll's King on Beale Street in Memphis, where Elvis learned much of his musical style. The guitar in the photo has become a popular receptacle for the calling cards of visitors. Quick Pictures Forum (GO QPICS), Library 11, "Landmarks," EPSTAT.GIF (47,311 bytes). G

We Can't Go On Together—An alternative take of "Suspicious Minds," without background vocals, horns, or strings, sampled from RCA's *Elvis: From Nashville to Memphis, the Essential 60's Masters I* collection. One of many WAV-format Elvis samples in this library. Recording Industry Forum (GO RECORD), Library 12, "RCA Records," SMINDA.ZIP (385,682 bytes). W

For "Dread"-heads—Reviews of the debut album and a concert by Dread Zeppelin, who do reggae versions of Led Zeppelin tunes fronted by "Tort Elvis," an Elvis impersonator. Rocknet Forum (GO ROCKNET), Library 8, "Heavy Metal," DREAD.ZEP (2,489 bytes); Library 14, "General Misc.," DREAD.ZEP (2,028 bytes). T

Elvis's Guide to the Universe—A fictional account of dream-state interviews with Elvis transcribed by the author, who believes the visits were the King's way of "taking care of unfinished business" regarding the purpose of his life on Earth. Science Fiction Forum (GO SCIFI), Library 19, "Fiction/Working Mss," ELVIS.TXT (189,406 bytes). T

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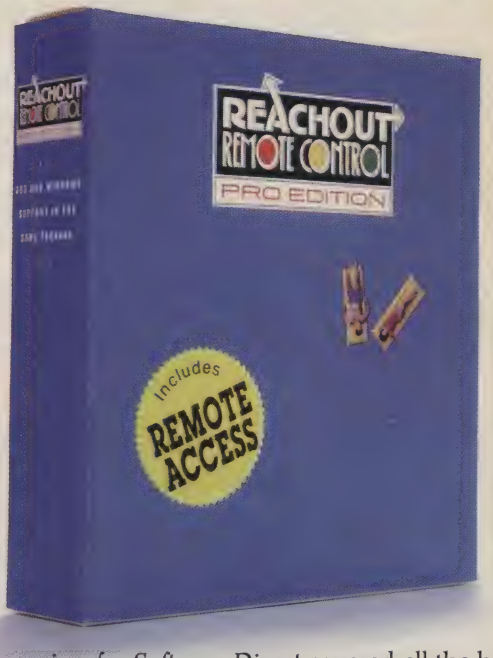

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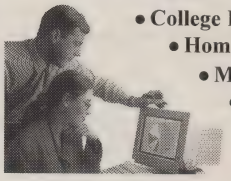

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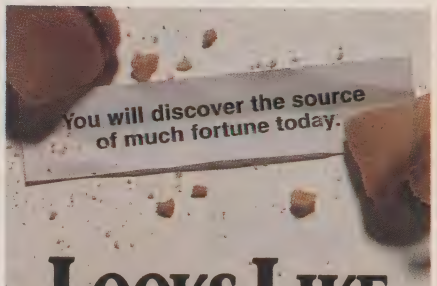

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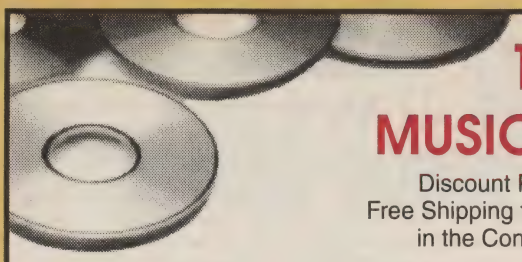

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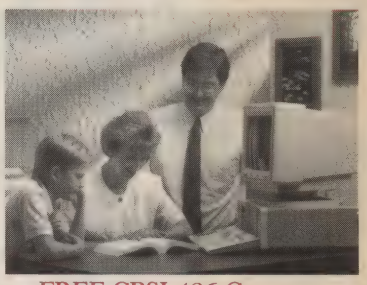

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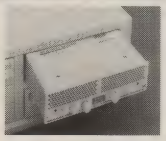

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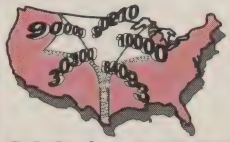

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How to Get the Most Out of CompuServe

with Charles Bowen

Charles Bowen is a contributing editor of *CompuServe Magazine*, author of *CompuServe From A to Z*, and co-author of *How to Get the Most Out of CompuServe*, both from Random House.

* *

I am looking for a Christian-based forum in which I might interact with others, download Bible study lessons or notes, research current events, and learn how other Christians are responding to them. Any information would be greatly appreciated.

Cliff Pettit
Half Moon Bay, California

Drop by the Religion Forum (GO RELIGION), which has a section of its message board and data libraries devoted to Christianity. The last time I was there, Robert Archer was the section leader. Other sections deal with world affairs, ethics and debate, scholarship, and so on.

When looking up the exchange rate for the Canadian dollar, I found four different ticker symbols for it: CCD, ECD, XCD, and XRCD. Basic Quotes showed the same rate for all four of them. What, then, is the difference?

Andreas Knapp
Mainz, Germany

I had to call in the CompuServe financial gurus on this one. CompuServe associate Shawn Stevens, who monitors GO FEEDBACK, gives us the lowdown on the four symbols you found in the stocks database (GO INDICATORS): "XRCD is a World Market Quote and it comes to us by an international provider," he says. "This is the best issue to choose if you want to receive the quote for the Canadian dollar. The other issues (ECD, XCD, and CCD) are market close prices for the various exchanges. These are presented because these exchanges have options which trade off of the Canadian dollar. If you use the LOOKUP service, you will see that these issues have options available for retrieval. The ECD and XCD issues are traded on the Philadelphia Stock Exchange. The only difference between them is the type of options traded. For example, XCD trades an end-of-the-month option, which the others do not. Since this is a unique case they created a new ticker symbol and CUSIP number to track these separate from ECD."

Can I obtain a list of SIC (Standard Industry Codes) numbers anywhere on CompuServe?

Mike Hardcastle
Kent, England

CompuServe has a database of the four-digit Standard Classification Codes (used by government and financial services to identify primary types of business). To reach it, enter GO SICCODE, which brings you to a menu with options to find the codes for various industries, including agriculture, forestry, and fishing; mining and construction; manufacturing; transportation and public utilities; wholesale trade; retail trade; and finance, insurance, and real estate. Choose the general area you are researching, and subsequent menus get more specific. (For instance, the agriculture option leads to choices between agricultural production/crops; agricultural production/livestock; agricultural services; forestry; and fishing, hunting, and trapping.)

Also, you might visit the Investors Forum (GO INVFORUM) and look in Library 1. Using the keyword SIC, I found at least two files of note: SIC.ARC, which lists all the codes, and LASIC.ZIP, an IBM-compatible shareware program designed to help the user determine a company's SIC code.

Send questions to CompuServe User ID number 70007,411. If your question is answered in this column, we'll apply a $25 connect credit to your CompuServe account.

Mensa® Puzzler

This month's Mensa Puzzler was submitted by CompuServe member Michael O'Connor. You'll find the answer in the Mensa Forum's News Flash (GO MENSA).

After having his dollar changed into six coins, a boy had the misfortune to drop one down a grating. What is the chance that the coin was a dime?

BRIAN BEHNKE

Do you have a Puzzler that you'd like to share with *CM* readers? Send your entry of no more than five brief puzzles (with answers) to: Puzzlers, *CompuServe Magazine*, P.O. Box 20212, Columbus, OH 43220. Include your full name, address, daytime telephone number, and CompuServe User ID number. Puzzles that are not sensitive to character positioning may be sent by CompuServe Mail to User ID number 76004,3302. If your puzzle is used here, we'll credit $35 to your CompuServe account.

Graphic of the Month

CM's Graphic of the Month for January is *A Fantasy Insect World,* by Sergio Pozzetti. Pozzetti created the materials and image maps using PhotoShop 2.4 and Fractal Design Painter 2.0 on his '486DX2 computer. He then reprocessed them and made the geometric elements with 3D Studio. The image resolution is 640 x 480. Download the image from the Graphics Developers Forum's (GO GRAPHDEV) Library 7, "Raytrace Images," as file INSECT.JPG (277,044 bytes). Pozzetti, 19, studies computer engineering at the Instituto Superior Tecnico in Portugal. He has been interested in computer graphics since he learned how to use Sculpt3D on an Amiga five years ago and hopes to make it his career.

This month's runners-up are *A Pirate Spaceship Being Chased by Enforcers*, also by Pozzetti, located in the Graphics Developers Forum's Library 7, "Raytrace Images," as file CHASE.JPG (130,911 bytes); and *Pretty in Lace*, by Robert L. Clemens, located in the Photography Forum's (GO PHOTOFORUM) Library 6, "GIF/JPG/People/Kids," as file BOBC25.GIF (208,472 bytes).

Other January finalists include *3D Rendering of a Surreal Scene*, file NEON3D.GIF in the Autodesk Multimedia Forum (GO ASOFT); *My Version of the Emerald City of Oz*, file EMCITY.GIF in the Graphics User Group A Forum (GO GUGRPA); and *1960 Wood Chris Craft, at Speed*, file CHRIS3.GIF in the Graphics Corner Forum (GO CORNER).

If you have a favorite image on CompuServe, consider nominating it as a Graphic of the Month. To do so, simply GO GRFMONTH and fill out the online survey. (Please note this is a new nomination process. Do not send nominations via the old method to User ID 76004,716.) If the image you nominate is selected as the Graphic of the Month, you and the image uploader/creator will receive a $25 CompuServe account credit. Image uploaders/creators are permitted to nominate themselves, but only one $25 credit is applied to each member.

MEMBER ESSAY

Saved From an All-Night Session of Messin' With UNIX

While in the U.S. Air Force, I was working with a new SCO UNIX system and Oracle 7. We had just finished a day of "Introduction to SQL" book training and started checking out the Oracle system and UNIX to make sure that everything was ready for the rest of the week's hands-on training. After we began, we found that no more than two users could log onto the system at once. I had just recently installed the SCO UNIX Open Desktop upgrade and figured that I must have missed something in the installation process. This was not a production system, so it didn't bother anyone until then.

With a contractor on-site and being paid money for training time, I was faced with having to back up the whole system, reinstall the SCO upgrade, restore the Oracle files and all of the user accounts, and be running by the next morning's class. Not likely!

The system documentation didn't offer any immediate help, and a tech-support call was out of the question, so I logged onto CompuServe before going home for dinner and dropped off a question in the SCO Forum (GO SCOFORUM). After dinner I logged onto the Information Service from home and found not only that my answer was waiting for me but also a UNIX shell script to assist.

I was able to run the script provided by the SCO sysop to re-serialize my system without losing any data or software! A potentially long night of work was cut down to 20 minutes. That's what makes CompuServe indispensable.

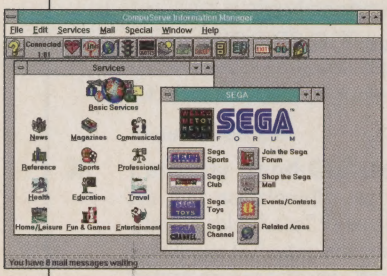
Matthew Hauser
Minster, Ohio

Compete for $50 worth of connect-time credit in *CompuServe Magazine*'s monthly Member Essay contest. Write a 200-word essay describing an original way you've used the Information Service and send it to CompuServe User ID number 76004,3302. Include your full name and address.

UPDATE

Pick a Picture

Access images for business and personal use in the Photos to Go area online. Index Stock Photography, one of the world's largest stock-photo agencies, provides selected GIF and JPEG images from its collection of more than 500,000 photographs. Use them in newsletters, multimedia presentations, and personal publications. Downloading the images incurs a fee. Shown above, an image of the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges in New York City. GO PHOTOSTOGO



Sega Game Land

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Get multimedia from top films in the Hollywood Online Forum. Hollywood Online works directly with the world's leading motion-picture studios to develop multimedia covering the latest movies, television shows, and home videos. Also, interact with industry professionals, enter contests, and browse an extensive library of GIF, WAV, AVI, and multimedia files. GO FLICKS

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Relive America's golden years in the American Oldies Diner, a forum that celebrates the years 1955 through 1970. Interact with the staffs of oldies radio stations and talk about oldies music, automobiles, fashion, and nostalgia. Download images of ads of the time, full-motion television commercials, radio-station jingles, and restored classic cars. GO OLDIES

Professional wildlife artists display their work in the Great Outdoors Forum's Outdoor Art Library. Featured artists include Ken Hunter, who has painted wildlife and outdoor scenes for more than 25 years. Take a look at Hunter's depictions of a Great Blue Heron, Chinook Salmon, Whitetailed Deer, Gold Finches, and more. GO OUTDOORSFORUM

Stephen Procko's one-man photographic exhibition was recently unveiled in the Fine Art Forum in tandem with the public display of his collection at Photos & Photos gallery near Miami, Florida. Titled "Forms, Textures & Space," Procko's exhibit shares his reclusive moments in remote areas of Canada, Nevada, and California. View his works in the forum's Library 8, "Forms/Texture/Space." GO FINEART

NEXT MONTH • **The Alternative Office: Telecommuting and Other Options Give a New Face to the Workplace** • **Windows on QuickTime: PC Viewing of the Popular Mac Videos** • **Taxing Procedures: A Look at Electronic Filing** • **Secrets of the Computer Canvas: How Ray-trace and 3-D Images Are Made** • **Making a Mark: Rubber Stamping**

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Thom Hartmann,
Sysop, Desktop Publishing Forum

"In May of this year we incorporated with you and are extremely happy with the services you provided. With your services, you took the mystery out of incorporating and made Delaware law work for us. It's also nice to know that whenever we have a question, we can just dial you up (as we did quite a few times when we were filling out those S status filing and EIN application forms!). Thanks again for all your help!"

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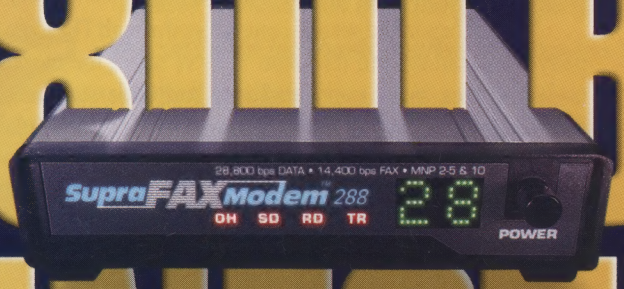

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